

THE ENGLISH
CHARACTER BY
SPENCER LEIGH
HUGHES 'Sub Rosa'



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THE ENGLISH CHARACTER
By SPENCER LEIGH HUGHES, M.P.





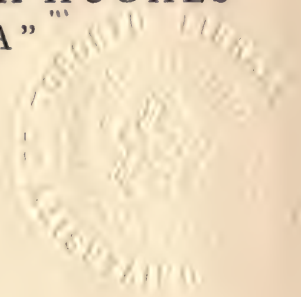
THE GOOD OLD SPORT

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THE ENGLISH CHARACTER

By SPENCER LEIGH HUGHES

"SUB ROSA"



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PREFACE

AS an excuse for the production of this book I can plead that it is only a little one, and that this is my first offence. Pliny the elder is said to have uttered the encouraging remark that "no book was so bad but something might be learned from it." A little later the author of this humane sentiment was destroyed by an eruption of Vesuvius, and some critics have regarded the incident as a judgment. I do not share that view, and I try to persuade myself that even if Pliny had seen my small effort he would have been too soft-hearted to reconsider his opinion.

SPENCER LEIGH HUGHES.

LONDON, 19th Sept. 1912.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTORY

THE ENGLISH CHARACTER BY SPENCER LEIGH HUGHES

CHAPTER FIRST INTRODUCTORY

WHEN DR JOHNSON DECLARED THAT "round numbers are always false" he meant, I suppose, that sweeping general statements are never accurate. The truth of the remark has been illustrated many a time by those who dogmatise on the characteristics of different nations, saying that the men of one country are brave, the men of another are emotional, and the men of a third are deceitful—the fact being that there are all sorts of men in every country. In England there are some who take the simple line of saying that "all foreigners are fools," and that everything that is good is necessarily English in origin. This is said about beer—by those who think that beer is good. Others claim that the Bible is really an English publication, even as Christmas is an English festival established by Charles Dickens. I have heard of an old lady who protested against the Lamentations of Jeremiah being translated into French, declaring that there was something positively indecent in trying to convey these melancholy reflections to the reader through so lively a medium. She evidently shared the view of Dean Ramsay's Scottish old lady who held that it was futile for French people to offer up prayer, as no one could understand such "jabbering bodies."

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And if the view taken by English people of themselves is often distorted, it is also true that we might be quite as much misled if we see ourselves as others see us. One of the most generally entertained notions abroad is that all Englishmen are cold, stiff, and phlegmatic—men who never show emotion and are incapable of excitement. A young German lady, married to an Englishman, told me that she had come over to this country entertaining that view, and soon after her arrival she was taken to Manchester on a memorable night in a general election when a series of sensational returns were being announced. She saw corpulent cotton magnates embracing each other, waltzing together, and uttering whoops and cock-crows of delight—the climax being reached when one gentleman of leading position in the city, and known to her as a man of grave and even austere disposition, placed his silk hat on the ground and deliberately jumped on it with both feet, explaining to the on-lookers that he didn't care—well, a straw, or something of that sort. After that the lady reconsidered her views in regard to Englishmen and their supposed stolidity and stodginess of disposition. The fact is that just as it takes all sorts to make a world, so there are all sorts of temperaments to be found among Englishmen, from the fellow at one end of the scale who has no more feeling than a leg of mutton to the fellow at the other end who will prance and scream

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with epileptic fury on the slightest provocation or with no provocation at all. Who has not heard it said that an Englishman will sit opposite to another all the way from Euston to Glasgow and never utter a syllable? No doubt, such incidents have occurred; but most of us have met with an Englishman of another, and perhaps a more trying, type, who will insist on telling his travelling companions his past history, his hopes and fears in regard to the future, the merits of his wife or his Aunt Martha, and the scandalous manner in which his Uncle Joseph's will failed to carry out promises repeatedly made by that gentleman during his life-time.

Again, it is commonly said that Englishmen are brave, and while this is fortunately true about many, the claim is made as if the possession of this admirable quality distinguished Englishmen from the men of other nations. When it is impossible to deny bravery in a foreigner, we say that he is "quite English" in disposition, while an unworthy member of our race is conveniently dismissed as "un-English." I remember an amusing instance of this sort of thing in a newspaper report of a battle during the South African war. In the same column there was a most scornful allusion to the Boers for "skulking and sneaking" behind rocks, and then we were told that when an English regiment was called on to advance, the men did so, "cleverly taking advantage of cover."

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Both sides were sheltering themselves as much as possible, but that which was sneaking and skulking on the other side was a proof of intelligence on our own. Nor is bravery the only good quality which some would claim as a monopoly of the English, for another is what is called "common sense." The Englishman is said by Englishmen to have no nonsense about him, and this is true enough in regard to many, but the claim is made as if in this respect he differed from foreigners. Yet there are plenty of shrewd, level-headed Frenchmen, Germans, Dutchmen, and so on, just as there are plenty of feather-headed, eccentric Englishmen — and charming fellows many of them are. What a drab and intolerable country this would be if all men were always kept down to a level of common sense! I remember reading an account of a visit paid by some foreign potentate—either a Shah of Persia or a King of Siam—to a club known as the Lions. Among the members were some of the greatest scientific men of this country, and one of their customs was that instead of applauding at their club dinners, the gentlemen should stand up, and each should wave one of the tails of his dress-coat and should at the same time roar like a lion. The distinguished visitor, after he had satisfied himself that the gentlemen were not insane, joined in the tail-wagging and the roaring, with startling gusto, and

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he was delighted to find that what may be called the standing orders of common sense had been suspended for the occasion.

I can give a curious instance of quickness and nimbleness of thought on the part of an Englishman in connection with the visit of a Shah. The great man was making a semi-state visit to one of the big towns in the north and was driving through the crowded streets accompanied by the Lord Mayor. At one point a man in a prominent position imitated Ingoldsby's sacristan, for he "put his thumb unto his nose and spread his fingers out" just as the Shah passed. "What does that mean?" asked the Shah, and the Lord Mayor at once replied that it was a national salutation indicative of affectionate regard and of profound respect—and the procession moved on. Some hours later the Shah was leaving the town by special train. All the notabilities were there—Lord Mayor, Aldermen, Town-Clerk, and so on—while a number of troops forming a guard of honour were drawn up rigidly at attention. The Shah stood on the end platform of his saloon exchanging parting greetings with his hosts, and just at the last moment, when the train began to move, he seemed suddenly to remember something. His thumb was graciously placed to his nose, and then he twiddled his illustrious fingers at the astounded onlookers, the effect being heightened by the half-melancholy Ori-

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ental smile which accompanied what he thought was a display of affectionate regard and profound respect. None but the Lord Mayor understood the true inwardness of the farewell salute, and he had the happy consciousness of feeling that he had saved the situation. The stern moralist may frown upon the good Lord Mayor, but I think his innocent deception was better than a blundering and apologetic explanation. And as for those who did not understand the Shah's curious performance with thumb and fingers, they accepted it as one of the eccentricities of the great.

Daniel Defoe, in his *True-born Englishman*, has said many unkind and some unfair things, but it strikes me he is right in his reference to "that heterogeneous thing, an Englishman." And just as each one of us is a mixture, so the race itself cannot be correctly tabulated or labelled. In one day you will meet with Englishmen who differ from each other in gifts and graces, in character, temperament, and disposition, more than any one of them differs from any foreigner—the term foreigner being used, of course, to indicate one belonging to what is known as a civilised nation. It is said that we grumble, and so we do; but to grumble is human, and grumbling does not mark out the English as a peculiar people. It is said that we brag and boast, and again I admit it; but the nation whose sons never brag and boast is not likely to survive long. Kind people say that as a nation



ONLY A PENNY, DAME!

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we love and speak the truth, but that same love of the truth which is thus attributed to us compels one to protest that we are not all George Washingtons. If a man were to do business even in the City of London on the principle that an Englishman's word is his bond, needing no other security, he might have nothing to regret in many cases, but there are some undesirables even among English business people. Let us, however, cease to insist on this diversity, which must be apparent even to those who most love to make sweeping statements, and to speak in "round numbers." For this diversity, this mixture of all sorts, makes the English all the more interesting and provides all the more types for consideration and comment.

CHAPTER TWO
STATESMEN & POLITICIANS

CHAPTER THE SECOND OF STATESMEN AND POLITICIANS

WHAT AN ENORMOUS NUMBER OF MEN there are in this country who can claim to be in public life. They include the Prime Minister at the head of the vast procession, followed by all sorts and conditions of men, until we arrive at the town-crier or turn-cock at the other. They all regard themselves more or less as public men—"deep on their front engraven, deliberation sits and public care." Those who belong to representative assemblies may be roughly divided into statesmen and politicians, and men are apt to describe those who agree with them as statesmen and to dismiss the other fellows as politicians. I have always maintained that all men in the House of Commons, and tens of thousands outside, have the right to call themselves "statesmen," because good Thomas Fuller in his *Worthies of England* has said :

The word statesmen is of great latitude, sometimes signifying those who are able to manage great offices of state, though never actually called thereunto.

He must be a poor-spirited politician who does not claim to come within the ambit of so generous and reasonable a definition. Who is to prove that a man is not able to manage a great office of state if he be never called thereunto? It will be seen that if Thomas Fuller's view be accepted, there are 670 statesmen in the House of Commons, and an enormous crowd out-

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side. That being so, it has been found necessary in the House to make distinctions, to show that there are statesmen and statesmen, and to draw the line somewhere. That line has been drawn between those who are Front Benchmen and those who are not—and it is really a great gulf which separates these two classes. Mr Birrell, now a distinguished Front-Bencher, said when he was a Back-Bencher :

There are gradations in the Front Bench. Between the leaders of the House who bag all the best moments, and the humble under secretary or civil lord there is a great gulf fixed. These latter gentry are not allowed to speak at all, except on matters relating to their departments, or when they are told off to speak by the leader. Nothing is more amusing than to notice the entire eclipse of some notorious chatterbox who has been given some minor post in an administration. Before he took office he was chirping on every bough; hardly a night passed but his sweet voice was to be heard. After he has taken office he frequently has to hold his tongue for a whole session.

All this is true enough, but at the same time even such a gentleman is one of the mandarins, though possibly only a little mandarin, or a mandarinet. When he does get a chance to speak he can lean on the table and thump it, and there is an enormous advantage in

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that. In these days he gets a private room in the premises, and there is also an enormous advantage in that. But it is impossible to explain the superiority of the Front-Bencher over the others by merely reckoning up advantages of that sort. There is the difference of status and of degree. I am told that an archangel cannot fly further than an angel, but he must be conscious of his higher rank. And so, though the Front Bench under secretary may not be able to speak as often as some talkative gentleman below the gangway, he moves in a serener atmosphere. He has not to scramble in to prayers in order to secure a seat, but can lounge in, in full view of an admiring strangers' gallery.

There is another dividing line to be seen in the House when a Parliament is new, and it is that which divides the new members from the old. The new member is made to feel his position, and though, no doubt, the old member does not mean to be insulting to the new, his airs of affable and even kindly condescension are worse than open brutality. The old member seems to regard the new member as an abject imbecile who knows nothing at all, and who has to be told everything like a little child. So the veteran shows the novice round the premises and explains things in this way: "Now this (pointing down) is the floor"—a fact which would probably have been at least suspected by the most simple-minded new mem-

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ber that ever entered the chamber. "That up there," continues the man of experience, "is the gallery, and the way to get there is by going upstairs to it." Or again, in his desire to tell his uninformed friend everything about the place, he will say: "You see that round white thing in front of the gallery—that is the clock, and you look at it when you want to know the time." There is, indeed, no limit to his willingness to impart information, nor is there anyone equal to an old member for saying an undisputed thing in such a solemn way. And then the new member will notice that during his first session, and possibly during his second also, he is reminded in other ways of his unfledged condition. For old members hardly ever speak during the earlier part of a new Parliament without using some such phrase as "We who have sat here in previous Parliaments are of course aware"—or "I must apologise to the older members for stating that which is of course well known to them, but for the sake of those who are new to these surroundings I must point out"—and then he goes on to announce some perfectly obvious point, as that the second reading of a bill comes after the first. This sort of thing arouses much bitterness, which is none the less intense because it is suppressed. A new member who resented this sort of thing, and who was a fine athletic fellow, once told me that it was only his respect for the speaker that held him back from pick-

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ing up one of these patronising old gentlemen, laying him on the table as an unopposed return, and banging at him with the mace.

Of course in writing about politicians it would be improper and absurd to suppose that they are all to be found in the House of Commons. It is interesting to notice, however, how the influence of the House spreads to the outside. If two costermongers are engaged in controversy, as sometimes happens, and if one calls the other a liar with a few adjectives of an intensive character, as also sometimes happens, the other will very likely retort, "'Ere, I sye, old matey, thet's 'awdly Pawlimentry langvidge." His objection to the phrase "blank blankety blank, blank liar" is not because of any inaccuracy when regarded from a descriptive point of view, but because it would not be allowed in the House of Commons. And here let me say that many of the rules of procedure in the House, and in other bodies which have to some extent imitated its rules, have been framed in order to prevent gentlemen from using the word liar about each other and to each other. Simon de Montfort knew all about this danger, for though he was an alien immigrant, he had been early initiated into our methods of political warfare. According to Green's *History of the English People*, when de Montfort reminded Henry III. of some promise,

The king hotly retorted that he was bound by

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no promise to a false traitor. Simon at once gave Henry the lie, adding, "and but that thou bearest the name of king, it had been a bad hour for thee when thou utteredst such a word."

It will thus be seen that the King and Simon exchanged the words "traitor" and "liar," words which have been bandied about in the world of politics ever since. Thus when Simon de Montfort schemed our Parliamentary system, he knew that unless precautions were taken the members would be saying hardly anything else. The words were therefore declared to be out of order—and so the severest rebuke which an argumentative costermonger or bargee can address to one who accuses him of lying is that such a remark is "'awdly Pawlimentry langvidge."

And again, members of a Parish Council, of a Board of Guardians, or of a vestry, love to refer to "this House" when they allude to the body of which they are members. It is the influence of Westminster, whether they are conscious of it or not. Nor does that influence end there, for anyone who has listened to a discussion in a railway carriage or on the top of a 'bus must have noticed that those concerned make use of phraseology which they have picked up when reading reports of Parliamentary speeches. You will hear a man say, "If I am in order I should like to point out"; he will enlarge on "ways and means"; he will begin a retort by saying, "Arising out of that reply"; he will "venture to

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submit to the hon. gentlemen," and in a score of other ways he will show that the House and its methods have affected him. I have seen men in railway trains unconsciously imitating the attitudes of hon. gentlemen at Westminster, leaning back with folded arms and with hat tilted forward over the forehead, or throwing out the hand in either an accusatory or appealing manner. Sometimes when one refers to another in the course of conversation the one referred to will gravely raise his hat—for he has seen this done across the floor of the House. The fact is that directly a man begins to talk politics anywhere he secretly imagines himself a member of Parliament, and as it is just as easy and as cheap to do the thing well when in the realm of imagination, he generally fancies himself leaning on the table and thundering against a recreant government or an unworthy opposition.

There is another respect in which argumentative politicians imitate, unconsciously perchance, chosen representatives of the people—while they have much to say, they seldom listen to anything said by the other fellow. Debates consist in the delivery of a number of speeches which have very little connection with each other, whether those debates be conducted at St Stephen's or in a taproom. If A says, "I support this bill because it will improve the condition of the people of Scotland," and B interpolates, "But it does not apply to Scotland," A will answer placidly,

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"That in no way affects my argument"—and very likely he is right. All politicians everywhere never allow anything to affect their argument. They say a thing, and in order to prove it they say it again, and they keep on saying it, a little louder each time—and it is supposed to prove it. Whether the House of Commons is, or is not, responsible for this method of proof by repetition and lung power I must leave others to decide. Nor do I suggest that it is a bad method. It certainly suits the taste of the average Englishman far better than logic, for most honest Englishmen suspect logic. They think there is something sneaking about it, even as the unsuccessful young gentleman at Cambridge declared that he could not stoop to the low cunning of algebra. "Logic," says your Englishman: "we are not governed by logic. The French are a logical people—and see what it led them to in the French Revolution." Now when men begin to talk about the French Revolution or to quote Shakespeare it is always time to cease.

CHAPTER THREE
TITLED PEOPLE

CHAPTER THREE TITLED PEOPLE

I HAVE OFTEN THOUGHT THAT A MOST interesting chapter might be added to history if ever we could have a truthful return of the real reasons why different people have received titles—ornamental titles, I mean. I remember hearing a well-known member of Parliament, at a time when there was rather a scramble for knighthoods, exclaim in the House of Commons that the members could be divided into the benighted and the to-be-knighted, and I daresay that is a fairly safe tabulation to be made at any time. It has been laid down by many recognised authorities that the term “the nobility” does not refer solely to the peerage, for it is a fact that a man may be included in the nobility without possessing any sort of ornamental title. It seems that there are two sorts of nobles in this country—the greater nobles and the smaller nobles, and it has generally been agreed that the barons come at the tail end of the greater, while the baronets march at the head of the second class. At the same time, it ought to be acknowledged that the baronets themselves have never accepted that view, as they secretly regard themselves as belonging to the first division. But the barons decline to admit this contention, and I am told that there has always been ill-feeling between the two classes in consequence of this cold attitude taken up by the barons. They seem to be saying “Second class lower down” to these other gentlemen who wish to join them. Thus the position of a

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baronet has always been somewhat trying, as he is almost, but not quite, the real thing, and his difficulties have been added to of late by an unsettling discovery that there are such people as bogus baronets—margarine instead of butter, shoddy instead of honest broadcloth. The result is one can never feel quite sure about a baronet.

Then, again, there are knights who, with much plausibility and even cunning, argue that as a knight holds his title because it is conferred directly on him, whereas a baronet may inherit his title, and thus cannot claim personal merit, a knighthood is more honourable than a baronetcy. It is because of these trials that all humane persons have agreed that one should always be kind to baronets and encourage them. And while there are these jealousies and rivalries among those who may be called the lower orders of the titled classes, there are also heartburnings among those who move in what should be the serenest atmosphere at the other end, or the top, of the scale. Why is it that in fiction or on the stage a marquess is always represented as a gloomy, sour creature, generally addicted to cold-blooded crime? I think the explanation is this—he is almost, but not quite, a duke. It is said that Thackeray, when he saw two barrels of oysters side by side, one lot labelled one shilling a dozen, and the other fifteen pence, exclaimed, "How those oysters must hate each other!" Here we have a recognition of the fact

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that the fiercest jealousies are between those who are almost but not quite equal in status. It would be absurd for a knight or a baronet to glare enviously at the strawberry leaves of a duke—but this seems natural enough in a marquess. I once knew a man holding a distinguished position as a permanent official in the Civil Service, and he had an Order of some sort conferred on him. He said, and I am certain he was sincere, that he attached but little importance to the distinction, and was not elated or puffed up. But then it happened that another man holding quite a similar position received an Order just a little better, and my friend said to me in a tone of obvious and grim sincerity, "There is no law of God or man that I would not cheerfully break in order to get level with So-and-so."

The fact is that directly a man gets any sort of title or decoration he resembles a man-eating tiger that has tasted blood—he wants more. Milton has pointed out that Satan came to grief because he felt that one step higher would set him highest, and so, long ago, I resolved that so far as I was concerned it must be a dukedom or nothing. Up to the present it has been nothing, but I am not going to compromise. Observe the advantages of being a duke—you know that you are the limit, you are the top dog, if the phrase may be used with proper respect. You can order all noblemen other than your brother-dukes to go round to the tradesmen's entrance when they call, and to

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leave the front door to be used by their betters. Nor should it be forgotten that a duke may wear a real gold coronet with eight strawberry leaves of equal height above the rim. Possibly some reader may ask with insolent indifference : " What of that ? " The indifference is not only insolent, it is affected, for every man knows in his heart that he would like to walk about wearing such headgear, and no man knows this better than a marquess. He, poor fellow, has to put up with a coronet with only four strawberry leaves, and four " pearls," as a rule made of silver. How can such a man feel content and at ease when he knows that his next-door neighbour beats him by two to one in gold strawberry leaves ? I can imagine the gloom with which the marquess hangs up his coronet at night on the peg in the front hall, and counts his humble allowance of strawberry leaves. It may be that on some occasion when he has lingered at the club those leaves may appear to be eight instead of four—but secretly he knows that this is only a momentary optical illusion, and they will shrink again to the real number in the cold light of the morning.

There is another trial that has to be endured by marquesses, for there is a strict official regulation as to the length of the train which a peeress may have on the floor trailing behind her. The duchess gets six feet of this sort of thing, and the marchioness has to be satisfied with three inches less—indeed, three

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inches are docked from the train at every stage you go down in the peerage. Now, after all, a marquess is a man, and it must really spoil his evening if he sees his wife walking about at a party with a train three inches shorter than the wife of his next-door neighbour. One is reminded again of Thackeray's oysters at a shilling and fifteenpence a dozen. Moreover, if the lady is a woman of spirit she may upbraid her unhappy lord, saying, "Why are you not a duke?"—the very question that is eternally haunting him. This sort of thing gives rise to trouble and ill-feeling all the way down the titled ranks, until we get to that humble sphere to which I have already alluded, where barons and baronets snap at each other, and even the knight tries to assert himself. For the marquess who has been irritated by a duke, turns on the earl and rends him, and the earl passes on the attention to the viscount, who proceeds to take it out of a baron, and lower than that no self-respecting man will care to follow the matter.

When that delightful wit, Monckton Milnes, was created Baron Houghton, someone asked him what it felt like to be a peer, and he replied with mock solemnity, "Never until this day was I aware of the immeasurable superiority of the humblest member of the peerage over the most exalted commoner in England." Of course he could afford to indulge in a joke on such a subject, but the fact remains that the average Eng-

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lishman dearly loves a lord. It is true that you sometimes meet with a man who snaps his fingers at titles, saying that nothing would induce him to accept one ; but such a man either knows that he has no chance of being tested, or is resolved to reconsider his position should such a test be applied. I once heard a young draper's assistant say three times in the course of a short conversation that he would not consent to be in the Prime Minister's place for £100,000—the Prime Minister alluded to being Mr Gladstone. It is easy to protest your indifference to honours and distinctions that are not likely to come your way. But for all that most men secretly yearn after something of the sort. I am told that just before the Honours List comes out each year there are despairing and abject appeals for recognition that might well move a bronze image to pity. Only case-hardened statesmen can ignore such appeals. Of course that experienced man of the world, Disraeli, could not only reject a suppliant, but could add a heartless jest to the refusal, as was shown when he declined to confer the Order of the Thistle on a Scottish nobleman, adding that he did so because the noble lord might eat it. It is said that most of these pathetic requests for titles are inspired by the suppliants' wives, and there may be something in the suggestion. But I am certain that many a man has lusted after a knighthood, and has secretly danced with delight on getting it, chiefly be-

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cause he knew it would madden his next-door neighbour who had no chance of such a distinction. This may seem an unworthy motive, but it is human, and after all there is a good deal of human nature about knights as well as about other men. It is all very well for men to quote the lines

“The rank is but the guinea-stamp,
The man’s the gowd for a’ that.”

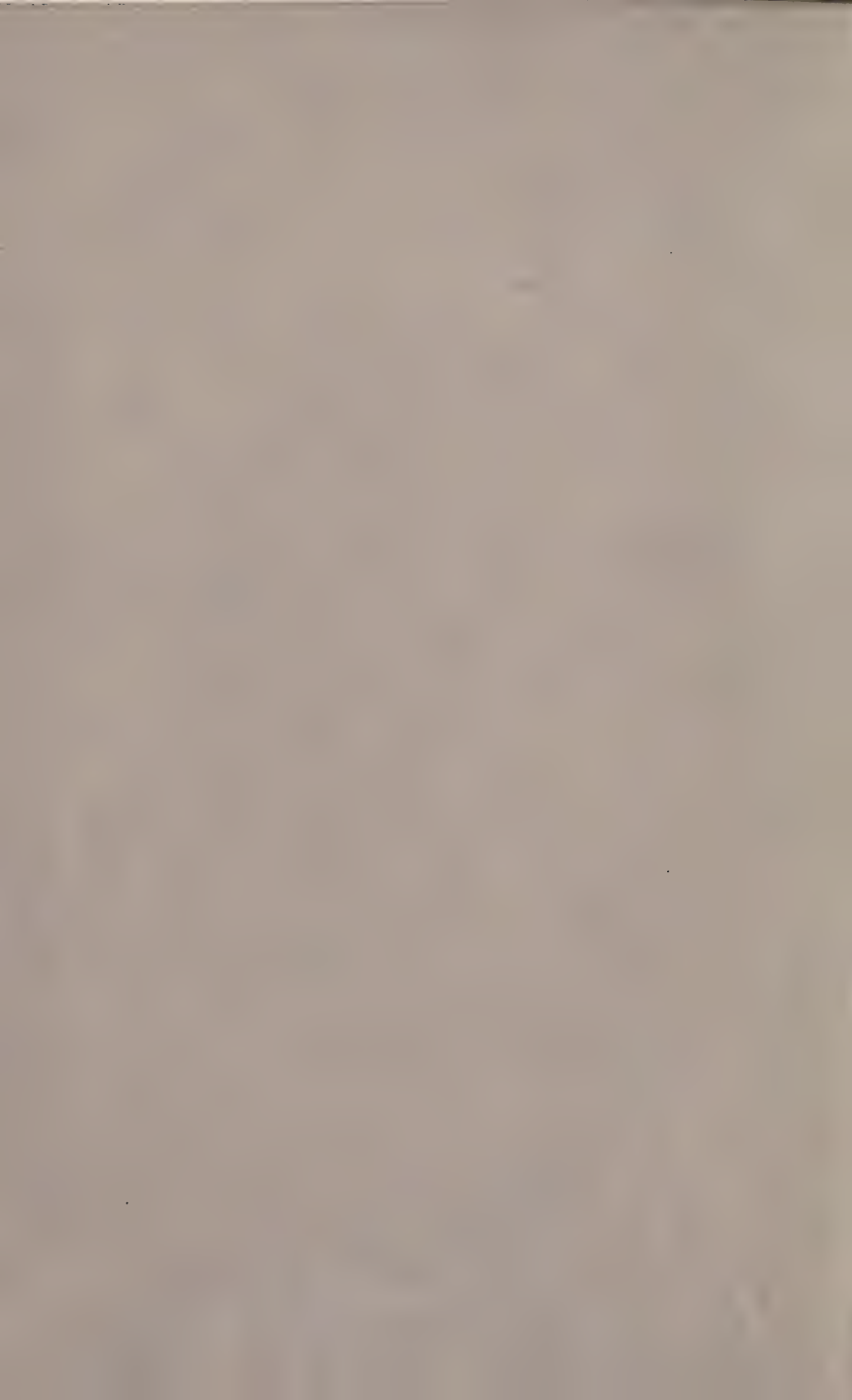
You may go on chanting “for a’ that, and a’ that” until black in the face, but these protestations as a rule are not convincing. You may safely make three assertions about most of the men who have been made knights within the last ten years: (i) each one of them had at some time or other vowed that nothing would induce him to accept such an honour; (ii) each had begged repeatedly and piteously for it; and (iii) after it had been obtained the recipient said he did not attach the slightest importance to it, and had only consented to accept it in order to “please the missus.”

It is ever thus—it has been so from the beginning, and so it will be even unto the end.

CHAPTER FOUR
OFFICIAL PEOPLE



THE ALDERMAN WHO COULDN'T BE TRIED



CHAPTER FOUR OFFICIAL PEOPLE

I HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED THE FACT that the people who are in some way or other connected with public life make up a vast army. They differ enormously in status, but there is a certain air of conscious superiority about them all. Let us consider a few types, in no logical or settled order, but just as they occur to the mind. Take aldermen, for instance, to begin with. In London, and possibly elsewhere, aldermen may be divided into three classes: (i) those who have passed the chair, (ii) those who have not, and (iii) those who could not get past if they tried. We should not blame aldermen for magnifying their office, for there are great traditions connected with it. Alderman Snooks cannot forget, nor is there any reason why he should forget, that princes, earls, governors of provinces and other persons of distinction were generally termed aldermen by Anglo-Saxons, those wise old ancestors of those of us who did not come over with the Conqueror and the upstart Normans. There was a time when this nation had an alderman of all England (known as *Aldermannus totius Angliæ*), and I have always regarded such a man as being the limit in the direction of human pomp and glory, transcending alike Czar, Kaiser, or Grand Lama. He must have been a good all-round man—not only an alderman, but THE alderman—the very quintessence or final climax of aldermanity. It is true that the office has lost something of its original glory, but your modern

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alderman is still a prominent citizen, he is a man of weight in local councils, he looms large in the eye of the public. He is as much superior to the common councillor as is the Lord Mayor's coachman to all other coachmen. I make no apology for introducing that remarkable man when writing about official people, for he is a great civic, nay, a great national, asset. Years ago I had the privilege of riding round London in the Lord Mayor's procession, and I saw him as he was, in all his glory. When the show halted outside the Law Courts, I took the opportunity of advancing with cringing salutations to the coach on which he exalted sat, and I said to him respectfully, "How do you do, sir?" With the affability which marks true greatness he replied, "I am very well." That was beyond all doubt the proudest moment in my life. I once walked round St James's Square talking to the Duke of Norfolk, and that was a memorable experience, but I am sure his grace will not be offended when I say that it was not really a circumstance compared with the other affair. A few years ago Mr Wright, the Lord Mayor's coachman, went with other and smaller notabilities to Paris in state. That visit did much to establish the *entente cordiale*, and the chief factor, the main entity, in the business was no doubt the coachman. At the time I dedicated an ode to him which made up in sincerity for anything it may have lacked in metrical merit, and here it is:—

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I

Hail, coachman, on thy box of state,
Calm as inexorable fate,
With gorgeous hat on powdered pate,
Immense, superb, serene !
The aldermen before thee quail,
The flunkey fawns and wags his tail,
Even the sheriffs both turn pale
Before thy haughty mien.

Chorus

For you're all right, good Wright,
As right as Wright can be ;
You could run the show alone,
Weighing nearly twenty stone ;
You are right to the final "t."

II

While in the capital of France,
The men applaud, the horses prance,
And gay grisettes around thee dance,
A sweet, entrancing sight !
Let trumpets sound and drums be banged,
Trombones be burst, and banjos twanged ;
As I don't pay—expense be hanged !
Here's to you, Mr Wright.

Chorus

Here's to you, all-right Wright !
Here's to you, Wright or wrong !
May the shadow of your figure
If possible grow bigger
As you swagger on the Continong.

This heartfelt offering was never acknowledged, but
I like to think that this was because the hero of the

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occasion shrink from arousing jealousy in those whose inferiority was admitted and mentioned.

The aplomb which marks the holder of office can, of course, be seen in those of much humbler status. Take the turncock, for instance—what consciousness of power there is in the manner of his standing in the midst of a busy street attending to his professional duties! He knows that if necessary the whole of the forces of the country would be called upon to see that he is left undisturbed. In his unofficial hours at home he is only a humble member of the public, and it may be that he quails before his wife—as did John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough—but directly he steps forth as a public official a certain unconscious but quite appropriate hauteur marks his bearing. It is the sign-manual of officialdom—the same outward and visible sign of conscious power which enables ruling potentates to look their best when on view in public. Again, let us consider the case of the postmistress in a small town. What calm insouciance she displays when in office accepting the hesitating and apologetic attitude of the public as a proper recognition of her connection with a great government department! Though possibly mild and even shrinking naturally, she is able when acting as a public official to give one a look that would “wither an anchor,” to use Charles Dickens’s tremendous simile. And so it is with all who hold public appointments. There is

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an indefinable something even about the official dust-man—he has a look at which the world grows pale. The consciousness that a man performs public duties of some sort, that he holds office, that he is, so to speak, in power, causes him to protrude the chest, and also induces all other men, as by instinct, to admit his superiority.

The most striking illustration of this truth is, of course, to be seen in the policeman. Many of these men are, in private life, extremely affable. A year or two ago I met a London policeman at a seaside place, and of course he was in mufti, as the phrase goes, the result being that I did not at first recognise him. He revealed himself, however, and he talked away about his domestic concerns—his sister-in-law's little boy, and so forth—in a very pleasant manner. I could hardly believe that his voice had ever been raised in stern admonition saying, "Pass along there," or "Move on," or that he had ever informed some obstreperous fellow that he had better go quietly or he would get "what for." It needed an effort to remember that one of his thumbs resting quiescent in his lap had, on a hundred occasions when uplifted in London, held up half-a-mile of traffic. Yet so it was. He may have detained the chariot of an impatient millionaire—I like to think it—but he was not proud. That is to say, there was no taint of personal pomposity about the man in his private intercourse—though when on duty he would have confront-

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ed ten thousand Bengal tigers with unruffled front and calm disdain. It is so in every sphere of life. Let us revert to Parliament for a moment—sometimes a gentleman who has always struck one as a model of shrinking diffidence becomes a junior whip, and then one sees a difference with a vengeance. Not even the turncock in all his glory, or the policeman towering in his pride of place, is more overawing than the junior whip on duty. How he holds his fellow-members with his glittering eye, speaking as one that hath authority, saying to one “Come,” and he cometh, and to another “Don’t go,” and he dare not, unless he stoops to the base conduct of furtively escaping by some unwatched exit! There is an increase of importance almost as remarkable in the case of the gentleman who becomes a Justice of the Peace. You will sometimes hear men speaking lightly of magistrates, and alluding to them as “beaks”; but if the secrets of all hearts were revealed it would be found that most of those who indulge in such unworthy talk have tried to reach the position which they affect to despise, and have failed. I do not say that this increase of personal importance or pomposity on the part of office-holders is greater among the English than it is among men of other nations, for I believe this is not the case. No one can approach in this respect the average station-master at any small station in France. He may be, and probably is, a sound Republican, but there is no recogni-

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tion of equality in the manner in which he regards the public herded and penned behind barriers awaiting his good pleasure. And they accept the situation, feeling their position acutely. But though our officials may not attain to quite so high a level of self-assertion as that, they do most certainly show a consciousness of additional importance, however slight may be the superiority in their position. I have known a man give himself airs at the expense of another because he was on the executive committee of a club, whereas the other man was only on the general committee. I believe that the rural district councillor holds that a vast gulf separates him from a parish councillor, just as a beadle looks down on a town-crier. The decay and the almost total disappearance of the parochial beadle is one of the most saddening signs of the times. Originally he was a man of considerable importance—mentioned many times in the Domesday Survey, and recognised by Lord Coke in his Fourth Institute. Alas! more than fifty years ago a thoughtful writer declared that “parochial beadles were probably in their origin persons of this description, though now employed in more menial services.” At one time they had the right, which they exercised, of tapping on the head those who slept in church—but in these degenerate days I doubt if such an attention would be accepted with meekness even from the hand of a bishop. And the town-crier is not what he was, nor is the sidesman.

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As a cheering contrast to this lessening of authority it is pleasant to recognise the advent of a new class of officials—the commissionaires who adorn the entrances to great hotels. Whenever I pass one of these superb creatures on duty I feel that it is only owing to his tolerance that I am allowed to use that part of the pavement which really comes within his sphere of influence. He seems to combine in himself authority which is at once *de jure* and *de facto*. Nor do I object to the airs of conscious power assumed by such a man, or by any of the holders of office alluded to, or by others not mentioned. We should all do the same had we the opportunity—indeed, if I were a dustman, duly appointed by some public authority, I should rival in pomp Cardinal Wolsey himself.



THE STAMP OF OFFICE

CHAPTER FIVE

CRANKS AND FADDISTS

CHAPTER FIVE CRANKS & FADDISTS

THERE IS IN MACAULAY'S HISTORY A well-known passage about "the political mountebanks whose busy faces were seen every day in the lobby of the House of Commons" towards the close of the seventeenth century. The type is by no means extinct, and though such visitors cannot enter "the" lobby to-day, unless accompanied by a member, they swarm in the outer lobby or central hall. All sorts and conditions of men are to be seen there daily, from the ordinary beggar to the man who has an honest and well-considered scheme for changing the face of Europe. Some have been in the habit of attending regularly for years, nor does persistent neglect or failure hinder them from sending in their well-known cards. When poor old Sedley, in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, came to grief commercially, there was no more pathetic sign of his collapse than his habit of carrying about bundles of worn and dingy papers, tied with string or tape, which he eagerly opened out in order to explain some vast industrial scheme to anyone who would listen. There are not a few like him to be seen each day in the outer lobby, though as a rule their proposed schemes are not purely commercial. Most of them seem to be anxious to save the country—or even the empire—and undertake to show in five minutes how this can be done. Others have in their pockets a better budget than it has ever entered into the heart of any chancellor to conceive. The Navy, the Army,

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the Church—every imaginable institution or interest—has some gaunt would-be reformer pacing about in the curious crowd. I remember meeting a particularly wild-eyed reformer there some years ago, who was terribly upset about the situation, the outlook, and the general trend of events. He was certain he could put everything right if only he could meet with a member. At that time I was not a member, though I could enter the members' lobby, so in I went and brought out an hon. friend, telling him that there was a most interesting man anxious for an interview. My unsuspecting friend stared when he saw the strange being whom I introduced, and then listened for a time to his wild message. Then the member said, "You really think the whole country is going to the dogs?" The crank replied earnestly that he was sure of it, and not this country only, but the whole of the civilised world. The member continued, "I suppose this occasions you much anxiety?" and was assured that the visitor was unable to sleep at night because of being haunted by the topic. Upon this the hon. gentleman, taking a shilling out of his pocket, made the curious remark, "Well, here's a bob"—it was eagerly accepted, and the man, who a moment before had been groaning over the impending doom of all civilisation, pocketed the coin and hurried away, apparently thinking that there was hope for the world after all.

Of course, they are not all like that, for there are

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cranks who could not be bought off by Rockefeller. Some years ago there was one who varied his usual plan of distributing pamphlets in the outer lobby by flinging stones at the windows of government offices, in order to call public attention to some message he had for the world. His trouble was that insanity was increasing; he had a plan for stopping that increase, and as Mr Balfour, who was then at the head of affairs, declined to see him, he demanded Mr Balfour's impeachment. I took some interest in the man, as he was really a crank of purest ray serene, and I visited him at his home, in comfortable lodgings in Bloomsbury. There he showed me a map of these islands, so shaded as to indicate those parts in which insanity was increasing more or less rapidly. It happened that the map showed that insanity was most prevalent in those parts of the country in which the political party to which I am opposed had won most of its victories at the previous general election. So I agreed warmly with his theories, and begged leave to be allowed to reproduce the map in a paper, and this was done, together with some remarks about the author which were so flattering as to make him dance with joy. About two years after this a London morning paper unfeelingly described my cranky friend as a lunatic, and when he brought an action for libel, I was subpoenaed as one who had some knowledge of the gentleman. I remember telling Sir Frank Lockwood, who

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was retained for the paper, that I was to appear as a witness, and we both looked forward to the occasion with pleasurable anticipation. Indeed, when I told Sir Frank about that map, and the grim evidence it gave of increasing insanity among those to whom both he and I were opposed, he was delighted, and vowed we would have a fine time when he had to examine or cross-examine me. The day came, and Sir Frank opened the defence of the paper so vigorously that the jury stopped the case before I was called, and so the chance was missed. The crank seemed to be in no way depressed. He asked the judge to accept a copy of the celebrated map and pamphlet, and to be allowed to give one to each of the jury, and his lordship, with kindly courtesy, agreed to both requests. The last I saw of the plaintiff was when in court he had made these presentations he also offered one to Sir Frank Lockwood, who eagerly accepted it. My interesting friend never appeared again in the outer lobby, and for a long time the place did not seem the same without him.

He was perhaps the finest specimen of the genus or species ever known in that resort which attracts so many of his kind. But he had rivals, and there are some to-day who remind me of him. Of course, the word "crank" or "faddist" is very loosely applied, and is used concerning almost any man who has a new idea which he earnestly advocates. Those two quiet

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men, the brothers Wright, who not very long ago startled the world by declaring that they had discovered how to fly in a machine heavier than air, were dismissed as cranks by many clever fellows—but they were right and the clever fellows were wrong, as is often the case. Years ago John Bright said he once asked a director of the National Provincial Bank of England how he accounted for the great success of that undertaking, and the director replied at once, “It is because we have no clever fellows at the head of it.” Again, there is something to be said for the view entertained by one of the haunters of the outer lobby with whom I was conversing not long ago. He complained of the unsympathetic and even derisive attitude of most members, and he added, “We who bring schemes down here may be looked on as fools, but we’re not half such fools as the members who laugh at us.” He spoke in his haste, and he used adjectives which I have not repeated, but there may have been some reason for his view.

A careless and forgetful world may have forgotten the name of Ebenezer Breach, a gentleman who for many years, and up to the day of his death, proclaimed the view that the earth is flat. He admitted that it is round even as a cheese plate is round, but he denied its globularity, and he made repeated demands for Parliamentary interference. The reader may wonder how Parliament could do anything in the matter, but Mr Breach used to point out that the Minister for

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Education was responsible for all that is taught in elementary schools, and he called on successive governments to recognise the truth and to see that the truth was taught. Year after year this worthy gentleman used to pounce on the speech from the Throne directly it appeared, to see whether at last the government of the day had recognised its responsibility, and though he was repeatedly disappointed he never despaired. The globular theory, he declared, was opposed alike to common sense and to Scripture, and was therefore at once foolish and wicked. He once asked me if I would see that the adjournment of the House was moved in order to have his views discussed as a definite matter of urgent public importance. I told him that I thought if the subject were fairly presented to the House possibly a motion might be carried to the effect that the earth is certainly more flat in some places than in others, but this was dismissed with emphatic scorn. Indeed, my worthy friend declared, and he may have been right, that compromise was the curse of politics. Now the true crank does not believe in compromise—unless, indeed, he be a crank who believes in compromising everything, and there are some of that sort. As a rule, however, they are men of stern conviction, and often men of one idea. I should not be surprised if in the varied crowd that gather each day in that outer lobby you will find men who believe they have discovered the elixir of life, and the trans-

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mutation of metals, the quadrature of the circle, the multiplication of the cube, and perpetual motion—men who will tell you who wrote the letters of Junius, who was the Man in the Iron Mask, on which side of Whitehall Charles I. was executed, whether Shakespeare was Bacon, or if Bacon happened to be Shakespeare. As a rule they are quite harmless—though on one occasion a man fired a pistol there in order to prove something or other. But you may say in regard to most of their theories, as Macaulay said of the utilitarian philosophy, they are less immoral and ruinous than gambling, and vastly more humane than cock-fighting.

CHAPTER SIX

LONDONERS & PROVINCIALS

CHAPTER THE SIXTH OF LONDONERS AND PROVINCIALS

LONDON IS NOT NOW THE PLACE OF mystery it was once so far as the average man living in the country is concerned. Railway travelling has altered the old condition of things, and you will find quite little market towns a long way from the capital horribly well informed as to the very latest song or joke at what the young men in the country knowingly describe as the "Tiv" or the "Pav." In spite of this the Londoner still gives himself airs of superiority when he "goes down into the provinces," as the phrase is. He talks in a most casual manner about "town" and "the city," though quite possibly he spends his days in a suburb far more somnolent than many a country town. It is enough that he is "from London"—a phrase which is supposed to recommend preachers, lecturers, actors, burglars, and indeed all people who live by their wits. In the country he affects an intimate acquaintance with the great, saying easily that he saw this or that Cabinet Minister in the Park—"looking jolly seedy, give you my word, washed out—but then the strain of London life is no joke, take it from me; we all feel it."

As a rule any man who assumes the airs of the "weary King Ecclesiast," who said that all is vanity, is not the real thing. That is to say, he is from the suburbs, and there is a tremendous gulf separating those who live really in town from those who live in the outlying dis-

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tricts. The hostilities between these two sections of the community may not be recognised in country towns—just as there is nothing on the surface of the sea to reveal the eternal struggle and warfare that is going on underneath. And then there are suburbs and suburbs, illustrating the Miltonic dictum that even in the lowest there is a lower deep. We live in days when old names are being replaced by others more ornate. No statesman who wants to get on in the world will venture to speak of the “colonies” to-day—he will allude to dominions, or dependencies; he will wave his arms and enlarge on those “vast kindred communities beyond the seas,” or “those great nations that have sprung into being beneath our flag and which encircle the globe.” Yet it is not long since Mr Disraeli reviled them in terms of contempt, and Palmerston asked for a map in order to “see where the d—d places were.” It is so in regard to the London suburbs. The word is now being dropped in favour of the term “greater London,” a phrase which sounds better, and is more suggestive of the metropolis or modern Babylon. And what an infinite gradation of comparative status there is in connection with these various districts! For some reason or other smart writers always affect to despise Brixton, and I once discovered that those who live in one part of the region look down on those who live in another. A young man was being derided for living there, and he replied with some spirit, “Ah, but my part

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is Brixton Hill, so that makes a difference," and this was accepted as palliating the offence. Again, does anyonesuppose that there is any community of feeling between those who live in Clapham Park, Clapham Common, and—Clapham Junction? Do Upper Tooting and Lower Tooting hobnob or even recognise each other? The sonorous Scriptural phrase "as far as the East is from the West" is pleasingly illustrated by the aloofness of East Dulwich and West Dulwich. I am told that there are little distinctions recognised in regard even to different parts of Peckham itself! Not long ago I saw a correspondence in one of the London local papers which showed that the residents on one side of a road in Shepherd's Bush looked on the residents on the other side much as a citizen of the United States living in a Southern State regards a nigger. And there are, of course, infinite complications in the northern parts, Hampstead and Highgate contending one against another, while many who have no right to do so emblazon "Regent's Park" on their note paper, for the sake of pomp and circumstance.

But all these warring, conflicting, and rival elements stand together as "London" when confronting the "provinces." Londoners will brag about anything that they think is peculiar to the capital, and the country cousin cannot make a greater mistake than to congratulate the man from town on the improvement in regard to fogs. The true Londoner is proud

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of fogs, and he likes to hear old ladies in the country speak of them with awe. He will tell weird tales about omnibuses careering along the pavements in the Strand or Cheapside, and how he had to chop his way through the fog with an axe. "Ah," he will say, "there's nothing like a real London fog, what's known as a 'London particular,' regular pea-soup affair, you know"—the fact being that there are many big towns in the north in which fogs are far more frequent and far more dense than in London.

And just as in London there are rival districts, so in the country there are competing towns. Just at present there is a movement to enlarge the boundaries of big cities, and there is an active competition in order to make this or that centre the next in size to London. Birmingham has stretched out its hands and taken in outlying districts, and thus claimed for a time to be "next to London." These proceedings were regarded with cold contempt by Manchester and Liverpool, cities which agree about few things, but which are at one in despising Birmingham. Glasgow was not content with an attitude of cold contempt, and immediately set to work to extend its area, so that I believe it has hopped to a higher perch than that of Birmingham, and towers in its pride of place. The same spirit of emulation is to be seen in connection with quite little adjacent towns all up and down the country.



THE DOO OF SUEBIA

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And in regard to the comparative status of classes and individuals in the country there is endless rivalry. Of course there is first of all the gulf which separates county people from those who are not county. It is not always quite easy to decide on which side of that gulf some particular person is, and the fiercest hostility is that which exists between one who is just in the county set and another who is almost but not quite in it. But let no one suppose that the large and important class known as tradesmen is a solid phalanx, for it is not. In a general way a draper thinks himself better than a grocer, while a grocer looks down on a greengrocer. The attitude of the one to the other is like that of the barrister to the solicitor—both lawyers, but of different grades. The greengrocer is a sort of a grocer, as his description proves, but he is not entitled to pose as a grocer pure and simple, that is to say, as a grocer who is not green. Then we have the shoemaker, the butcher, the pawnbroker, marine-store dealer, and so on and so forth. I make no pretence to place them in a correct sequence of precedence, but all this is known in small country communities. The men themselves are not always rigid as to their rights. They will meet in a friendly enough manner in the club or the bar-parlour. But these distinctions are pitilessly observed and insisted on by the wives of these gentlemen. There can be no real community of feeling between the draper's lady and the wife of a green-

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grocer. The "missus" of the butcher may be, and very often is, a most worthy soul—but the grocer's wife could hardly receive her at afternoon tea. You might as well expect the wife of a Nonconformist minister to be welcomed at the rectory. Between what may be called the absolute county set and the tradesmen there is, of course, the intermediate professional class. The solicitor and the doctor can claim to be members of learned professions, and they do not forget to do so. The position of the bank manager and of the accountant is not quite so clearly defined, but they are apt to speak of themselves as professional men. The chemist is also inclined to assert himself, and though he keeps a shop he is not going to be described as a shop-keeper if he can help it. Indeed, a chemist's shop is now a "pharmacy." And there are all sorts of other complications which lead to discussion and dispute. Thus a man who is a butcher in a large way of business in London takes a house in a little country place. Perhaps he is rich and goes about the district in a motor-car. Obviously he cannot be placed on a level with the village butcher, who stands in front of his shop and flourishes the cleaver with his own right hand. It may be that this man of meat from London insists on hunting, and he will find that while his subscription to the local hunt is accepted readily enough, he will strive in vain to force his way into the county set. Many of the good people in country districts who are the sternest

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supporters of this exclusive system subscribe large sums of money to send out missionaries to rescue those whom they are pleased to call the "heathen" in India from the deplorable evils of the caste system. They groan over the fact that the Brahmin and the Babu do not hobnob as brothers—but at the same time they take good care to have a tradesmen's entrance at their houses, and they see to it that only the *élite* are allowed to use the front door.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TYRANNY OF MUSIC

CHAPTER SEVENTH OF THE TYRANNY OF MUSIC

ONLY TWO OF THE SAYINGS OF WILLIAM Scott, Lord Stowell, seem to have survived in general usage. One is a reference to the "elegant simplicity of the three per cents.," which is enshrined in Campbell's *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, and the other is that fine humane sentiment that "a dinner lubricates business," and this was saved from oblivion by Boswell, who no doubt thoroughly believed in that which he reported. There are those who decry public dinners and speak of them as boring and wearisome, and most of these critics will have it that the after-dinner speaking should chiefly be blamed—but I maintain that these affairs suffer to a greater extent from the tyranny of music. The music and the singing ought as a rule to be far superior to the speaking, for the two parts of the proceedings are not put in anything like an equality of competition. Let us take a dinner which aims at arousing interest in some public institution, and at raising money for it—a very common and quite praiseworthy practice. In selecting the speakers the committee or promoters of the affair will decide that because this peer or that baronet has been a generous benefactor he must be called on to speak. He may be a "haw-haw" or a "hum-and-haw" speaker, nay, he may be a past-master of the "hee-haw" method—that makes no difference. He is asked to speak in spite of the fact that he cannot, because of his other amiable

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qualities, and in such circumstances it is not surprising that the experiment is often a dismal failure. But let us suppose that the musical part of the programme were managed in the same way, and that some generous peer or freehanded baronet were asked to sing Tosti's "Good-bye," or to oblige with a violin solo, having had no previous experience in such forms of art, the result would probably be worse than that which follows from putting up a halting speaker to "say a few words."

Even as matters are now arranged and conducted, I often suffer more from the music than from the speaking. No one, not even the speaker himself, objects to a man lighting a cigar, or exchanging a quiet word or two with a neighbour, while a speech is being delivered—but dinner-table discipline is rigorously enforced when the music begins. There is generally a musical committee which has arranged the programme, and these gentlemen speak with awe about the treat in store. Some operatic singer is introduced, and he or she goes through some tremendous vocal gymnastics, exhibiting great staying power. All through the prolonged performance, in some foreign language unknown to most of the hearers, no one must move a muscle. The members of the musical committee sit glaring at the victims, ready to repress the slightest sign of life. To wink at such a time is out of order, and the fellow who stirs his coffee is guilty



STORMING THE CITADEL.

THE TYRANNY OF MUSIC

of a breach of privilege. You have to sit rigidly still and to look grateful, pleased, enchanted, fascinated ! Moreover, these great singers have a trick of seeming to finish, and the inexperienced and untutored listener incontinently begins to applaud—and instantly the whole brigade of experts is down on him as if he were a thief. And I really think the instrumental performers are worse. There is always some fellow with a fiddle, and he is as unconscionable a time in beginning as Charles II. was in dying—but the fiddler seems to think he makes up for this prolonged series of smirks and smiles, and testing of fiddlestrings, by keeping on for a prodigious time when he has at last started. Many of them wind up on a thin, high, and outrageously prolonged note, and it is then that the watchful ones keep the sharpest eye on the unhappy sufferers. No one must move even a little finger. Should a fly alight on your nose, it must be allowed to walk about there undisturbed. No one can appreciate how long a fiddler can keep on that note until the hearer has had to wait until it is finished before he can swipe at a fly trespassing on his nose or behind his ear. It was in the very middle of one of these thin high notes from a fiddle that on one occasion I earned the contempt, nay, the furious hatred, of some musical enthusiasts. I wanted to sneeze, and it happens that I, in common with all honest men, have a loud, full, and resonant sneeze. There was no getting away from

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it, for a sneeze, like time or tide, waits for no man. And I knew that if I sneezed in a smothered style I should not escape censure. So, on the principle that one might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, I resolved to let fly—and I did. So great was the vibration of the air that the electric light glasses rang in consequence, and one man afterwards said he thought that someone had fired off a revolver. It was no good trying to look as though someone else was guilty, so I sat and grinned. Secretly I was rather proud of the performance, which was quite as good in its way as the business done with the fiddle—and far more loud. But I am sure that if I had only knocked the chairman on the head and stolen his watch during the speaking, instead of relieving the tedium of that everlasting squeak from the fiddle, I should have been regarded with far less fury.

Musical people also seem to think that there is some special virtue in their enthusiasm, and that people who neither sing nor play are incapable of being moved by music. This is a profound mistake, for many who are quite ignorant about the details of the business are more thrilled by the general effect of fine music than are the experts. These experts are always hunting about for some trivial slip or error. They will listen to a three-hours' operatic performance, and should there be one false note, they will fasten on that, and talk ab-

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out eagerly, while ignoring a thousand delights. The fact is that if a man has an ear—that is if he feels instinctively when some instrument or some singer is out of tune, and this is a very common gift—then the less he knows about music the more he will enjoy it. Someone has said that a man may love flowers without understanding botany, just as a man may be, and probably will be, religious if he is ignorant of theology. And it is so in regard to music—your musical man is often a dull mechanical dog with no real music in his soul.

Have you ever watched, say, thirty or fifty tenors all singing together in some great orchestra? The jealousies of those men are a continual treat to the thoughtful observer—a much greater treat, as a rule, than their vocal efforts. How mad one is if he thinks the next fellow is attracting a little more attention! It sometimes happens that a chorus is sung by a mixed crowd at a dinner when the musical and the non-musical are to be found side by side—an experience I have enjoyed many times. More than once I have found myself by the side of a friend who is enormously proud of his voice, and on such occasions he has tried to out-class, or out-sing, all others, indulging in wild swoops up and down, and always keeping on just a trifle longer than anyone else. Now I have always thoroughly understood his aim and intention—he has meant to inspire me and others with admiration and to induce

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us to say what a wonderfully fine singer he is. In other words, he is a typical musical man. At such times I have always ignored his side glances inviting me to take note of his vocal heroics—indeed, I have looked as unconscious of his efforts as though I were a horse gazing over a field gate, or the late Duke of Devonshire contemplating a public meeting. And it has given me keen pleasure to ask my singing friend, within a second of his ceasing to sing, some trivial question, such as “Been to Brighton lately?” or something of that sort, in order to afflict his mind with the notion that I really had not noticed that he had so much as opened his mouth.

Some French wit is said to have remarked, “I hate war—it spoils conversation.” I do not say that I hate music, for that is not the case—but it does often interfere with conversation. Not always, however, for I have noticed of late that ordinary men are beginning to defy the tyranny of the after-dinner musical performance about which I have just written. They insist on carrying on a little quiet chat if the singers insist on going through half an opera. It is in vain that the tyrants of the musical committee frown, wave their arms and indulge in pantomimic displays of anger or appeal. They are now and then confronted with a look of blank unconcern, and this is because they have overdone their tyranny. Moreover, many honest diners-out, men of quite average intelligence and culture,

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see no reason why on such occasions there should be quite so much classical music. Most people don't want it, and would much prefer an English song of reasonable length, set to a generally known tune, and leading up to a rattling chorus. Of course the musical expert will say that this is a debased taste and that I am asking for some contemptible music-hall doggerel, but that is not the case at all. The fact is that the musical expert will often welcome a song when it is new and unknown—but directly it becomes popular he throws it over, declares it is vulgar and degrading, though it is exactly the same song that he welcomed.

A few years ago I dined as a guest at a famous hotel in the West End, and one of the other guests was one of the directors of the hotel. After dinner we went to the lounge to listen to the band, the conductor of which was a most exquisite gentleman. He came to the director asking if any of our party would like to choose the next tune. The choice was left to me, and I said firmly, "Will you be good enough to give us 'Won't you come home, Bill Bailey?'" The eminent conductor looked at the director in despair, and I was asked if I really meant what I said. My reply was, that while I had no right to interfere without being asked, as I had been asked I had given my decision. The director, who did not know the "Old Hundred" from "God save the King," said cheerily

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to the conductor, "Go ahead"—and he went ahead.
We heard the tune I had selected—and, what is more,
the large and fashionable crowd there assembled
was delighted.

CHAPTER EIGHT
PUBLIC SPEAKING



HO I AM A LITTLE MAN

CHAPTER EIGHT PUBLIC SPEAKING

IT IS SAID THAT DR JOHNSON ONCE remarked of Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester, "The worst of Warburton is that he has a rage for saying something when there's nothing to be said." That may have been a natural failing in the bishop, but in the present day this sort of thing is encouraged and cultivated. All over the country there are classes or schools formed for the purpose of teaching public speaking. The result is seen in the appalling increase in open-air oratory. There are difficulties, and there is expense, to be faced in hiring a hall—but anyone can stand on a box or chair in some lawful spot and can deliver his message. And it is a fact that it matters but little what he is talking about, he is almost certain to get an audience. Of course controversial politics is responsible for much of the trouble, but not for all by any means. Even when a furious by-election takes place in some crowded constituency, say in South London, and attracts swarms of orators, some of them make no pretence to discuss political issues, and they get just as much applause as others. I well remember a great electoral struggle in Peckham, when night after night scores upon scores of speakers filled the air with their din at every street corner. In whatever direction you looked you could see arms sawing the air, and open jaws working away with almost epileptic fury. One orator particularly attracted me—he was an immense negro, black as

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night, black as the raven's wing—and he held aloft a huge book from which he was proclaiming some message to Peckham. I drew near, feeling curious as to which side he was taking in the great political struggle. It turned out that he was telling the tale that the earth is flat and not globular—and the people were cheering him to the echo. I moved on to the next orator, who was close at hand, and I found that he was preaching the doctrine that the inhabitants of this country are the ten lost tribes—and he also was cheered to the echo. Moreover, I noticed that some who cheered the ten lost tribes theory moved on and applauded the black advocate of the flat earth theory, while some moved away from supporting the gentleman of colour and gave a most hearty reception to the other gentleman. They were out to cheer somebody or something, and they cared not much about the person or the doctrine. There are favourite centres or pitches where, except in very bad weather, this sort of thing is always going on, and where every conceivable view or doctrine is being proclaimed by bawling prophets. In London I suppose the best known of these places is the neighbourhood of the Marble Arch. If you cannot there find oratory to suit your taste you must be hard to please, and he would be a clever man who could introduce a new theme. Nor is London the only place in which this oratorical uproar is unceasing, for I have heard some

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wonderful outbursts on the Quayside, Newcastle-on-Tyne, on a Sunday morning. These open-air orators soon acquire considerable facility in retort, as there is but little variety in the form of the interruptions, and so the speaker is generally ready with his reply. Of course the most ordinary interruption is the old, old remark, "You're a liar." None of these *al fresco* debates would be complete without this interpolation, and so every tub-thumper of experience knows it must come sooner or later, and is probably conscious that some of his statements really invite it. It is met in different ways. Sometimes the gentleman on the tub or the cart takes off his coat, and invites the other man to "come on." Another will reply with freezing dignity that he cannot stoop to the methods of the gutter or the ale-bench—but that style is not generally successful. All audiences are ready to sympathise with the platform, that is with the speaker, if he can get in a good one in the way of retort, but a soft answer rouses wrath instead of turning it away, and there is but one step between applause and the hurling of eggs or oranges.

I remember an orator in a London park being told that he was a liar, and he fixed his eye on the man who made the uncomplimentary remark, and said, "Ho! I'm a liar, am I? Well, perhaps I am, but I'm not the only one, by no manner of means—there's others abaht, Samuel Jones, so I tells you strite—put

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that in your pipe and smoke it." The crowd approved of this, and as a name had been given to the interrupter, they thought the speaker knew him, so the fellow was hustled away and had to sprint for it. As a matter of fact his name was not Samuel Jones, and the speaker had never seen him before. It was the pointed and personal retort that inspired confidence in the audience, and I learned afterwards that it was a trick which the orator had often tried with success. Years ago a public man of some prominence told me a tale about his early experiences as an open-air speaker, when he learned how fickle is the mob. When he was a youth he had taken part in an agitation against the rates in a certain provincial town, and he was known to have written a series of telling articles on the subject in the local press. A great demonstration was held in a field near the town, and he was put up as the chief speaker. At the beginning of the proceedings he was the hero of the occasion, and was introduced by the chairman as "our brilliant young friend." Now the young man was very conscientious, and just before the meeting he had discovered that the whole of the case he had made out in the local press was founded on incorrect information. So he resolved to explain this in a manly and candid manner, and to point out that the agitation which he had started was futile and ought to be abandoned. When he rose there was great cheering, and he was assured

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in chorus that he was a jolly good fellow. Some shouted that he ought to be made mayor, and others declared that they would send him to Parliament. These attentions, which would have been so welcome in other circumstances, only added to his agitation, but he resolved to do his duty, and he began his explanation. At first they thought he was indulging in sarcasm and persiflage, and so they laughed consumedly, and hailed his confession with cheerful cries of "Rats." This caused him to assure them with desperate fervour that he was really in earnest, and there was a pause. Then they began to hoot, to shout "Yah" and call him a traitor—in a few minutes he was chased from the field, and pelted with clods of earth. When he related the incident he said, "That experience convinced me that in dealing with popular audiences it is a grave tactical error to own up to a mistake. You should stick to what you have said, right or wrong. I have always done so since the occasion in question, and any little success I have achieved since then I attribute to the useful lesson brought home to me by those clods of earth in so striking a manner."

Even a friendly crowd can prove itself fickle, without being entirely hostile—as I found out some years ago when I was speaking in the open air near Hampstead. There was a large audience, and I, at any rate, regarded it as a very intelligent audience, as they cheered my pet points and laughed at my pet jokes.

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Then, as I was elaborating my case, I heard in the distance a noise that was coming nearer and nearer. There was the warning shout of "Hi, hi, hi!" indicating the approach of a fire-engine—for this was before the days when they used a bell or gong. The audience heard and recognised the sound—they may be said to have cocked their ears at it—and a second fire-engine came dashing along close behind the first. They passed close to the meeting—and in a minute all my supporters and audience (with the exception of the chairman in the cart with me—a man with a wooden leg) were tearing away, sprinting like destruction after the fire-engines. They had yielded to a natural impulse. Of course they soon had to abandon the chase, being unable to keep up—and they made amends by trotting back to me, and they cheered again as though nothing had happened. Few speakers have had the experience of facing a large and friendly audience which has within a minute scampered off into the distance. A man who is so treated is conscious of a feeling of helpless desolation and loneliness which is not easy to describe. The only man left was, as I have explained, the chairman, and he swore roundly at his unfaithful friends—though I feel sure that it was only his wooden leg that kept him true to the cause and the cart.

I have mentioned the effect of a good answer on an open-air audience, and an answer given at a famous

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by-election in the north of England has always seemed to me one of the most successful ever given, especially as it had no political significance. There were four candidates standing for one seat—a Tory, a Liberal, a Labour man, and an Irish Nationalist: and another gentleman turned up as an absolute Independent, vowing he would go to the poll, though he was never nominated. The crowd made huge fun of him, and it was said that at one time he had been under restraint for mental troubles, and had been restored to society as cured. This, of course, involved his having a certificate authorising his release. It happened that at one of his open-air meetings questions were invited, and someone bluntly and even brutally asked, "Ain't you a lunatic?" With great dignity he replied, "There are five candidates before this constituency"—he counted himself as one—"and I am the only one who can produce a certificate of sanity." This was not only undoubtedly true, but it was very much to the point; and the usual result followed, for the answerer went up in the estimation of the crowd, and the questioner was given a rough time.

CHAPTER NINE

THE SPORTING INSTINCT

CHAPTER NINTH OF THE SPORTING INSTINCT

THE CUSTOM OF DESCRIBING A MAN AS "a sport" or as "no sport" is modern, but the difference indicated is so old that it may be regarded as almost eternal. The word "sport," when thus used as signifying a type of man, has an endless variety of meanings, and while all sports despise all those who are not sports, that is the only agreement there is among them. For as one star differeth from another star in glory, so there are differences in the comparative status of various sports. I believe that men who hunt big game in Uganda—or wherever big game is hunted—look on themselves as being at the head of all those fierce tribes. Everyone has heard of the man who said that he should never forget the thrilling moment when he found himself in a hot corner in some distant jungle, and the cry of the beaters was "Hippo on the right, rhino on the left, ostrich over!" He was regarded as a liar, a suspicion entertained concerning many sports, and particularly concerning those who tell tall tales about prowess shown in circumstances as to which it is impossible to obtain any evidence, either confirmatory or contradictory. And even in regard to our home sports, what a variety there is! A betting-man, a prize-fighting bruiser, even a man whose only form of enterprise is borrowing half-crowns without the power or the intention of repaying, or the more amiable fellow who is always ready to give or to take a

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drink, all these are known as "good old sports." It was of one of this last sort that the question was asked—how much could he drink? The answer was that he could drink any "given" quantity.

Again, in addition to those who engage in what are generally known as field sports, or outdoor recreations, such as hunting, shooting, racing, fishing, and so forth, there are all those who play at different games. These men form a vast host, and they look with contempt on all who do not play games—reckoning even marbles as better than nothing—but here their alliance ends, and there are bitter controversies as to which is the chief or most worthy game of all. Let it be far from me to offer any suggestion—much less will I make any dogmatic statement—on so delicate a theme. But every observant man will have noticed that the golfer is fully convinced that his pastime is at the head of all forms of recreation. It is known as the "royal and antient" game, and it is more than a game, being really a solemnity. Only abandoned people like Mr Dooley refer to it with levity—and when he was asked why a good player at golf was known as a scratch man, Mr Dooley replied, "It's a Scotch game." I have seen leading statesmen who have confronted national crises with cool, unruffled front, suffering agonies of trepidation when called on to decide the fate of a match by a single putt. And we all know instances of men, ordinarily stately and correct in walk and conversation,

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breaking their clubs with fury, and bawling out language that has sent even hardened, experienced golf-course sheep shuddering away.

I have never been able to understand why these men take their game so seriously, and this has puzzled others, including that notable man, the ex-Sultan of Turkey. Some years ago a number of Britons living in Constantinople acquired land in the neighbourhood of that city and had it laid out as a golf course. Their proceedings were reported to the Sultan, and he heard with alarm of these gentlemen meeting together armed with sticks, and for some purpose planting little flags all over the ground. He was not only alarmed, but he was puzzled, and he looked on everything that he could not understand as in some way connected with a plot against his life, and so the police were directed to put a stop to these mysterious meetings of the men with the sticks and the little flags. Upon this the exiled Britons approached their ambassador and implored his assistance, which was readily given, and the Sultan was reassured that all was well. The result was a proclamation, or an *iradè*, or something of the sort, expressed in these remarkable terms, "The Englishmen may play ball if they like." The gentlemen concerned were, of course, pleased at the removal of the embargo, but they felt, as all true golfers will feel, that the phrase "play ball" is hardly a worthy description of the "royal and antient" game.

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Of course the devotees of cricket, and those of football also, will never admit the superiority of golf. These men sneer at it as a fitting pastime for the decrepit. But I have noticed this difference between the champions of golf on the one hand and of cricket or football on the other—the golf enthusiasts play at their game, while the most ferocious advocates of cricket and football never make any attempt to do more than to look on and shout. Perhaps I ought to qualify the remark that the golfer plays golf, for I remember once being told by a noble and learned lord, a great ornament in the legal profession, that just as the great Greek sculptors never claimed that they had carved this or that work of art, but used an expression meaning they had attempted to carve it, so the true golfer is humble and only claims that he tries to play golf, not that he really plays it. There is none of this humility or reverence about the man who watches and shouts at cricket or football matches. And I may say the same about those who affect a knowledge of horseflesh—the good old sports who generally “have a bit on” at the City and Sub. You will find cocksure confidence in the members of many classes in the community—politicians, medical men, theologians, and even among journalists,—but all such men are shrinking and shy creatures when compared with the blatant gentlemen who vow they know of a “dead cert” for Kempton Park. It generally turns out that the “dead

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cert" never "had an earthly," but the sports in question never learn by experience. They may suffer depression for a moment, but there is always some plausible explanation for their having "put their shirt on" a wrong 'un, and hope springs eternal in the sporting breast.

The angling sport is different from all others, and it is customary for people to say that which is evil concerning him. One venerable tale is told which hints at a weakness that is perhaps unfairly attributed to the fishing man. It is to the effect that a couple of anglers journeyed a long way to a remote spot, and settled down for action—if fishing may be called action—when one of them said with some concern, "Hang it all, we've forgotten the bait." The other replied cheerily, "So we have—but that doesn't matter, we've brought the whisky." This is an unfriendly tale, and I do not for one moment admit that the suggestion contained is justified by the general habits of angling sports. Again, everybody knows that the angler as such is looked upon as an antithesis to George Washington, or, in plain language, he is generally regarded as an infernal liar. He has earned this reputation by a certain tendency to exaggerate when relating his experiences, and particularly when describing the size of the fish he claims to have captured. They do not all go so far as the American gentleman who said that he dragged a fish out of the Mississippi, and that

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while he refused to mention its exact proportions, as he feared he might be suspected of exaggeration, he could state as an honest man that the whole river fell two feet when the fish came out. But as a rule the reported fish—the fish seen through the distorting mists of memory—is of nobler proportions than the victim that has been hooked. And there have been instances of men describing captures not only larger in bulk than the facts of the case justified, but captures which were entirely imaginary. Let us not be too ready to condemn these lapses. De Quincey has said that one ought not to expect a visionary, or one who can read the stars, to speak with the cold precision of a post-officedirectory—and anglers are visionaries as a rule. Moreover, the really blameworthy element in lying is deceit, and your fisherman does not deceive anyone, for no one believes him.

Darwin, who cannot be suspected of wilfully using facetiousslang, employsthe phrase “a sport” as meaning an organism which deviates from the normal or natural condition. This rather suggests that a sport may be a freak, and that is certainly the case sometimes. There are, for instance, those gay dogs or rollicking and roystering blades who delight in thumping you on the back or digging you in the ribs, and who are addicted to practical jokes. They are generally big men with red faces, and a suspiciously hearty, hail-fellow-well-met style of address; and they should

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be avoided, as they have a weakness for borrowing money. They like to be known as Bohemians, easy-going fellows—in a word, good old sports—but they are no good to anyone but themselves. I believe the Bohemian is a disappearing type, and I rejoice to think so, for a more impudent humbug never existed. In spite of his air of careless jollity, that sort of sport was as shrewd and calculating as a Jewish moneylender, and always had his moist eye fixed on the main chance.

And so there are sports and sports—good, bad, and indifferent,—as is the case in all classes of the community. But they are alike in having a contempt for men who are not sports. I remember being at a house in the country when one or two of these restless, worrying creatures wanted to have the chairs put down in a row so that everyone could jump over them. When I replied that I would much rather sit on a chair than try to jump over it, I was told in tones of the utmost contempt that I was no sport; and that was then and still is absolutely correct. The Bohemian, borrowing sport, with curious tricks in “tossing,” is, I should say, the worst of the lot; but the biggest nuisance is the ultra-muscular sport. He is always wanting to see if he can jump or kick higher than other people, and this of course means that other people must jump and kick also. He gets up at a foolishly early hour, and immediately begins to shout (he may call it singing) and

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to whistle and blunder and bang about the house. It may be very unsportsmanlike on my part, but when one of this type breaks loose near me, I always wish that someone would poleaxe him.

CHAPTER TEN

DANDIES

CHAPTER THE TENTH DANDIES

WHILE ENGLISHWOMEN ARE SAID TO be eclipsed by the women of Paris, Vienna, and New York, so far as dress is concerned, there is a legend to the effect that the Englishman is better dressed than any foreigner. Of course here, as elsewhere, it is not safe to generalise, for there are thousands of Englishmen whose raiment is rather of the scarecrow type, and others whose clothes, though respectable and free from rents and patches, would cause a West End tailor to groan and shudder. Sartorial critics and experts have often declaimed in the *Tailor and Cutter* and other trade papers against the trousers bagging at the knees and the ill-fitting coats in which leading public men appear. But as against these unworthy people we may call up for a review, a march-past and an inspection, some of our ingenuous youths who devote much attention to their clothes and to their personal adornment. I rather like a young dandy—he derives such obvious pleasure from the consciousness that he is the thing, nay, that he is the limit, or absolutely IT, when tricked out in the very latest.

The young dandy often regrets that he cannot indulge in the daring colour schemes, and in the elaborate decorative effects which were possible in the days of Charles II., and even in the later times of the Georges. But some young gentlemen even to-day manage to make themselves startling enough to cause a motor 'bus to take fright. The other day I saw an ad-

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vertisement and a specimen of a weird and fearsome material described as Impressionist Tweeds. The maker said, and said truly, of these gaudy manufactures: "These produce in cloth the blending of the primary colours, red, blue, and yellow; the result is strong in originality and distinction, appealing especially to those who seek striking combinations in colour." There can be no doubt about the strength of originality, or the distinction. The effects are not only striking, but they are of the strike-me-blind order. A lady who saw a piece of this glowing cloth said the effect made her think of a stained-glass window the colours of which had run in the wash! It is streaky like bacon, spotted like a victim of the measles, mottled and blurred, yet glaring, and altogether indescribable. Joseph's coat of many colours was, I doubt not, quite a tame and drab garment when compared with this material, which reminds one of the twinkling and variegated signal lamps seen at an important railway junction.

It is not every dandy who dares to confront the world in such defiant clothes, and many young men content themselves with concentrating their efforts to add another hue unto the rainbow when choosing socks and neckties and waistcoats. These things give the dandy his chance—especially the socks. There are socks which you can hear, they are so loud—socks that scream and socks that burn. And much courage

OF THE ENGLISH DANDY

is shown by the young in their choice of ties. One may adapt the lines of the poet and say, in regard to some of them :

“Thy ties have lit the welkin dome,
And all thy hues were born in heaven.”

Others suggest the blaze of another place, being

“Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell.”

As the city man studies the lists of stocks and shares, as the statesman ponders over the changing phases of the situation, so the young dandy concentrates his attention on his ties. These things have for him a deep significance, and even as there is a language of flowers, so to the initiated the necktie can convey a subtle lesson. Thus tie calleth unto tie, and the ear that is properly attuned can catch and treasure the message. Again, there are vast potentialities in the waistcoat. To say that there is often much more in a waistcoat than meets the eye would be to invite a jest which would be out of place. The waistcoat of the middle-aged man is, as a rule, uninteresting, and suggests only a policy of expansion. Some are so vast that one is inclined to think that the sun never sets on them. And the waistcoats of the aged are often wrinkled, and their creases sometimes harbour snuff. But the waistcoat of the young dandy differs from such things—it is a dream, a poem, a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. Time writes no wrinkle on its well-

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cut front—it faces the world with a serene consciousness of perfection.

And in this way the young man of the present day does what he can, but, as I have said, he often yearns for a return to the greater methods of the days of Raleigh and of Buckingham. The great Sir Walter used to walk abroad in a white satin pinked vest, close sleeved to the wrist ; over the body a brown doublet, finely flowered and embroidered with pearls. So says the erudite Isaac Disraeli, and the same authority describes the feather in Raleigh's hat with a huge ruby and pearl drop at the bottom of the sprig, his white breeches and stockings and riband garters fringed at the end. Nor must we forget the great man's shoes, "so gorgeously covered with precious stones as to have exceeded the value of £6600." And he had armour of solid silver, and a sword and belt blazing with diamonds, rubies, and pearls ! How can young Algernon or Bertie hope to vie with such splendour ? Something may be done with socks, and ties, and waistcoats, but the greatest efforts in these directions, even when backed up by a suit of impressionist tweeds as gaudy as a bed quilt, are ineffective when placed beside Sir Walter Raleigh's best clothes. And incredible though it may appear, that great man was eclipsed, so far as raiment was concerned, by the Duke of Buckingham. Here is a note taken by Isaac Disraeli from an old manuscript about the Duke's wardrobe : " He had



SOLOMON ECLIPSED

OF THE ENGLISH DANDY

twenty-seven suits of clothes made, the richest that embroidery, lace, silk, velvet, silver, gold, and gems could contribute ; one of which was a white, uncut velvet, set all over, both suit and cloak, with diamonds valued at fourscore thousand pounds, besides a great feather, stuck all over with diamonds, as were also his sword, girdle, hat, and spurs." This is enough to make our young friends of the present day droop in despair, and lose all interest in their socks. How can they compete with a fellow who, in addition to his other gaudy effects, put on £80,000 of diamonds when he went out to dinner ? Nor have I even now completed the tale of the Duke's superb " swank," for he had his diamonds but loosely tacked on, and now and then shook them off, never condescending to pick them up. Thus he never lacked followers—for he was worth following.

How we have fallen away, so far as the clothing of man is concerned, since those great days, days in which the leading dandies must have glittered as if they had been electric advertisements proclaiming somebody's whisky ! As I have said, even the boldest young dandy to-day—were he a multi-millionaire—dare not array himself in the style of Buckingham and Raleigh. And as for our modern dukes, are they not to be seen any day in the House of Lords dressed in a style that a butler would be ashamed of when taking a holiday ? The reader will have noticed that in the

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description of the Duke of Buckingham's display the hat and the great feather, both stuck all over with diamonds, were prominent features. A modern duke will wear a shocking hat with placid unconcern. It would be useless to appeal to him—but why should not Algernon and Bertie try to revive some of these brave ornaments? I will undertake to say that no Elizabethan courtier ever had feathers finer than the ostrich feathers that can be obtained to-day. The requisite article is ready; all that is needed is courage on the part of the young gentlemen. They have done well, nay, nobly, in regard to those things I have mentioned—socks, and ties, and waistcoats—but I really think they have exhausted their possibilities. It is time they launched out in a new direction.

I am encouraged to make this suggestion by the fact that there have been some indications lately of a desire to revive the customs of feudal times and the days of chivalry. Why should there not be a return to the stately white velvet suit? There can be no doubt that this abandonment of rich and splendid clothing on the part of the leaders of society—I refer to the men only—has undermined their influence in the world. Even the young men whose efforts to keep alight the sacred lamp of dandyism I appreciate are not as a rule members of the aristocracy. I doubt if you will find one member of a great family witching the world with impressionist tweeds or rivalling the sun-

OF THE ENGLISH DANDY

set with his socks. A brave bank-clerk will do more in the way of dazzling mankind by the chiaroscuro of his ties than is done by all the dukes in the land. We all owe much to these enterprising young men, even as they owe much to their tailors, in more than one sense. The moralists of the day tell us that what we as a people chiefly lack is earnestness, real devotion to some object, to some pursuit or principle—and I maintain that your true dandy is in deadly earnest when he seeks to preserve the proper crease in his trousers, and to fight against the outward tendency of the knee, even as the early fathers resisted the evil one. Thackeray has said that when men begin to go down in the world, when they begin to lose self-respect, the evidence of deterioration is seen first in an attack on their extremities—that is to say, in the inferiority of their hats and boots. The dandy may not be able to rival those of whom I have written, whose shoes were encrusted with gems, and whose feathered hats gleamed with jewels, but his little buttoned pointed boot is in itself a rebuke to the laced-up hobnailed abomination of the careless ruffian, nor does he forget the great lesson taught by Oliver Wendell Holmes:

“Wear a good hat ; the secret of your looks
Lies with the beaver in Canadian brooks.
Virtue may flourish in an old cravat,
But Man and Nature scorn the shocking hat.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

COMMERCIAL TRAVELLERS



CHAPTER ELEVENTH OUR COMMERCIAL TRAVELLERS

IT USED TO BE CUSTOMARY FOR writers of a certain class to refer contemptuously to commercial travellers, alluding to them as "bagmen." In America I believe the word used is "drummer." There is a venerable tale told in America which illustrates this attitude. It is to the effect that a man fell off the roof of a twenty-story block right on to the sidewalk or pavement, and was quite uninjured. The only explanation given was that he was a "drummer," and fell on his cheek. Just as some portions of the community—lawyers, journalists, and politicians—are compendiously dismissed as "liars," so all commercial travellers are supposed to be endowed with consummate impudence. Let me say at once that I do not share that view, and it has fallen to my lot to meet with many of these men, of all the different grades in their calling. There was a time when the leading travellers of the day were distinguished by a certain amount of pomposity in their bearing. A very elaborate code of etiquette was enforced in their dining-room, and when they marched in to dinner one might well think that they were a number of plenipotentiaries assembling at a congress of nations. The chairman had certain rights in regard to the ordering of wine, and there were niceties of position concerning the place of each man at the table which each observed. When those old customs were in full force

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I believe no man other than a commercial traveller could sit at their table without permission—and the request had to be made in a deferential tone. I do not say that a duke would have been thrown out had he failed to comply with these preliminaries, but the commercial gentlemen would have shown by their bearing what they thought of the ducal intrusion.

These rules have been to a great extent relaxed, though I believe that in large hotels it is still customary for a coffee-room guest to intimate in some way his hope that he is not looked on as an intruder, should he choose to dine in the commercial room. It has generally been in small hotels in remote places, particularly in Wales, that I have come across these gentlemen, who have been described in a book written by one of themselves as "Ambassadors of Commerce." Thus most of those whom I have met have been the smaller men of their calling, rather rough, but as cheery a lot of fellows as one can wish to meet. I well remember one occasion in a small hotel in South Wales, when I went into the dining-room before anyone else, not knowing that this involved me in certain duties. It was pointed out that being first in the room made it essential that I and none other must take the chair, and to my horror I found that this meant that I was to carve. Now, I cannot carve—few men can, though many who cannot think they can, while I have no illusions on the matter, cheerfully recognising my de-

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ficiencies. It was in vain that all this was explained—they all insisted and pretended to believe that unless the man who first entered the room did the carving, terrible ill-luck, amounting to disaster, would certainly overtake all present. So I yielded, saying that it was quite possible that something like disaster would happen to those sitting near me when the carving began. Luckily I was not called on to tackle the intricacies of poultry or game, for an enormous joint of beef appeared. As a special consideration I was allowed to stand up to the business, and I went to work with the utmost zeal—indeed, I put my back into it. The beef happened to be much underdone, and the result was that before I had finished wielding the huge knife my end of the table looked like the shambles. I made my mark that day—several marks and stains—but my friends cheered and laughed in the most encouraging manner. Later on it appeared that another responsible duty fell to my lot as chairman, for I had to collect two pennies from each man present, as contributions to two commercial travellers' institutions, enter the amounts in two separate books, add up the pence, sign the books and hand them and the money over to the landlord. I understand that this is done continually wherever travellers dine together, and big sums are thus raised in a manner that cannot be felt burdensome by anyone.

Commercial travellers are as a rule tremendous

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politicians. They read many papers on their long journeys, and in an evening they will debate public questions in hotel smoke rooms, contending one with another in a manner that makes the front bench encounters in the House appear poor and tame. They are very fond of ornate and official phraseology, loving to begin a sentence in some such way as "Unless my memory deceives me I think I am right in asserting." And they allude to the leading men of the day with extraordinary freedom—sometimes in a manner that would make those distinguished and right hon. gentlemen gasp and stare, if they heard the easy style in which they are ticked off. But of course the conversation of the commercial room is not always controversial in tone. Sometimes public questions and matters of business are dropped, and the talk becomes personal and pointed. As a rule the interchange of repartee between travellers, that which is technically known as "back-chat," is not subtle or elusive, but is rather plain and blunt. References to the peculiarities of personal appearance—the size of feet, the colour of the nose, the expanse of waistcoat, and so on—are favourite methods of scoring a point. The verbal lunge and parry and riposte on such occasions are generally quite good-humoured, though I remember one occasion on which an elderly gentleman of the road seemed to think that a waggish junior had gone somewhat beyond the limits of becoming mirth.

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The older of the two was rather bald, and such hair as remained on his head was white, while his moustache was jet-black, and the young wag, in order to add to the joviality of the evening, said, "I say, old man, I suppose you put your moustache out with your boots at night to be blacked." The remark was well received by all except the gentleman to whom it was addressed, nor did I soothe him by adding that his moustache would be described as "black as night and also black as Day—and Martin."

All those who have any knowledge of the subject agree that the commercial travellers of the present day are as a class a steady and temperate body of men. There is less "treating" as a method of securing orders than was once the case. The railway companies offer remarkable facilities to travellers to return home at the end of the week, and the result is that many make quite long journeys to join their families. And people who know nothing about the habits of these gentlemen of the road would be quite surprised to learn what an amount of solid reading is put in by some after the necessary letter writing in an evening is finished. I once came across a traveller in the Midlands who was studying a book with absorbed attention, and later on I found that he was reading Hobbes's *Leviathan*. It struck me that he was probably the only man in these islands who was at that hour poring over that curious work. On another occasion I detected a wor-

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thy representative of a big grocery firm working away most industriously at an epic in blank verse!

I am told that during the last year or two a large number of American travellers have begun to hustle up and down this country. A chemist informed me quite recently that many of these gentlemen from the enlightened and emancipated republic of the West are engaged in recommending patent medicines of the "cure-all" type, and that their methods differ but little from those of the eloquent cheap jack who harangues wondering crowds in country market-places on Saturday nights. Moreover, the American traveller not only pushes his goods, but he shows an amiable readiness to teach shopkeepers and their assistants the best way in which to run their business. I know of one case in which one of these trans-Atlantic gentlemen obtained the names and addresses of all the assistants in a shop, and afflicted them with long letters almost daily, explaining the art of wheedling a customer, and the true inwardness of "dressing" a shop window. In all the letters it was made quite clear that the traveller thought the chief duty of man consisted in singing the praises of the stuff sold by the traveller's firm, and in giving it prominence in the window. It is possible to be too assiduous in such attentions, and the old proverb which says that art consists in concealing art applies to the work of the traveller. Above all, he must never fail to be good-humoured—and in this he re-

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sembles men engaged in nearly every form of enterprise. Most British commercial travellers are endowed with this quality. They are not to-day quite so jovial and rollicking as the rotund old boys who used to jog round the country in a gig, almost capsizing the vehicle when climbing into or out of it, digging men in the ribs, smiting them on the back, and indulging in honest guffaws of horse laughter. But they are a genial cheery lot—they deserve a good time in this world, and I am sure they have as much chance of a good time hereafter as most men have.



CHAPTER TWELVE
STREET TRAFFIC

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH STREET TRAFFIC ANCIENT AND MODERN

ONLY A VERY FEW YEARS AGO THE novelist, when describing the adventures of a smart hero in London, always represented him as "leaping into a hansom." Of course no man, not even an acrobat, could ever leap into one of those awkward vehicles—but apart from that fact, how antiquated the hansom appears to-day! Lord Beaconsfield described the hansom as the "gondola of London," and the present generation looks on it as the Noah's Ark of the streets, its only rival being the horse-'bus. And the horse also seems hopelessly out of date, except for purposes of display in the park or in ceremonial processions. I regard the introduction of the taxi as the greatest modern reform in London life. Some say that it saves time, and that is undoubtedly so in many cases; but it is still true that men who formed their habits in the days of hansom and growlers often reach stations half an hour too soon as a result of using taxis, and waste their time and their substance at the refreshment bar. Perhaps the greatest change that motor traffic has introduced has been the change in the type of driver. The methods of the cabby of the old school were not always joyous but grievous, and he was often clothed with cursing as with a garment, or, as the old joke put it, he had "a habit of swearing." But he was human, and his cheery challenge, "'Ere, wot the so and so d'ye call this?" aroused the finest fighting and

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sporting instincts in the fare. Nor was cabby always successful, for he found, even as the French found at Waterloo, that the most magnificent charges sometimes fail.

I well remember seeing a cab stop at the door of a large club, and a portly man, wearing a most offensively new and polished silk hat, get out and walk into the brilliantly lighted hall. He gave the porter a coin to hand to the cabby and sauntered away, and then I heard the man on the box remark with savage emphasis, "I 'ope as 'ow 'e may drop down stone bleedin' dead," and so the incident ended, each man, driver and fare, going his way. On that occasion the curse had no effect, or no immediate effect; but sometimes a retort has turned away wrath. A friend of mine, who was in a hurry, noticed with disgust that his cabby managed to get behind every slow-moving vehicle and that he seemed to delight in dawdling. At the end of the journey my friend handed over the exact legal fare, and of course the driver burst forth with the customary "What do you call this?" The answer was, "That's your fare—I'd sooner ride in a hearse than in your cab," and cabby immediately retorted, "And I'd jolly well sooner drive a hearse if you was in it." My friend decided that the hit was worth another shilling, and handed it over. There are few chances of such encounters in these days of taxi-cabs, and the old drivers may well agree with Burke in think-

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ing that the age of chivalry has gone and has been succeeded by an age of calculators.

It is, however, when we turn to 'bus-drivers, and compare the old style, the cheery, talkative, red-faced horsey man who used to have a couple of favoured passengers on each side of him on the box, with the anxious, strained man at the wheel of a modern motor-'bus, that the greatest difference is revealed. The motor-driver has no opportunity for talk—he has no language but a "toot." The old-time driver, however, was always ready to discuss things in general, and to indulge in airy persiflage at the expense of other drivers, especially those who were private coachmen. These he always hailed as condemned gardeners, and he would urge them to get home and weed the flower-beds or roll the lawn. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that the 'bus-driver's remarks to those who got in his way were always lurid or profane. For instance, one was driving down the Strand when two men in a barrow drawn by a donkey came out of a side street, and compelled him to pull up suddenly. All the driver said was, "Now, then, where are you three going?" Many a poorer sarcasm has been received with favour in the House of Commons.

The first step in the direction of cutting off the 'bus-driver from free and easy intercourse with the passengers came when the garden-seat arrangement was introduced, and the driver sat alone in front. But even

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then he could hear what was said by those who were near him, and could, and did sometimes, join in the conversation in a most friendly manner. I have heard of a specimen of this amiable readiness to help which is perhaps worth putting on record. A young couple from the country were seeing the sights of London from the top of a 'bus, and the young man, who knew nothing of town, was assuming airs of knowledge in order to impress his admiring girl. The driver was delighted to hear him describe the Home Office as the Mansion House, the Treasury as the Bank of England, and the Law Courts as Westminster Abbey. Then St Paul's loomed in sight, and of course no mistake could be made about that building ; indeed, even the girl recognised it, but catching sight of the statue of Queen Anne in front, she asked, "Who's that?" The young man was not ready and hesitated, and it was then that the driver remarked pleasantly, "Come, come, don't give it up now, young man—tell 'er its Marie Lloyd !"

I have always thought one of the best 'bus stories is one that was illustrated, I think in *Punch*, years ago. A 'bus-driver was delayed by a very ramshackle and ancient growler, and a storm of invective, profanity, and blasphemy broke out. One of the remarks addressed to the cabby was that he should take his blankety blank blank rabbit hutch out of the way, and directly this injunction had been bawled forth, the

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fare inside the growler, a little bald, clean-shaven, precise-looking man wearing spectacles, popped his head out, saying, "What is all this about?" All the driver said to him was, "Hallo! little bunny, is that you?"

It is a curious fact that the 'bus-conductor, called in the first instance (without any offensive intention) "the omnibus cad," has never been noted for his wit. Indeed, he has been rather the target for the wit or abuse of others. I have been told a tale, the truth of which is vouched for by one who is at once a Tory baronet and M.P., about the Cockney young woman returning in a 'bus from the fierce delights and fearful joys of Hampstead Heath on a bank holiday night. She was approached by a gloomy and tired conductor with a demand for the fare, and instead of money she offered badinage. It was, "Now then, dearie, I didn't see you on the 'eath—the plice wasn't the sime withaht you," and so on, with many a dearie this and dearie that, until at last the unhappy man snapped out, "You 'and over your money, and no more of your sauce—I've been on my feet all day," to which the fair Cockney made reply, "Lord love me, if I 'ad a beautiful 'ead like yours I'd never stand on my feet at all." There is also a tale which used to be told at the Savage Club about an old gentleman well known at that famous resort, who was going home one night in the last 'bus, and was alone. The old gentleman had a severe and ecclesiastical countenance, though

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there was nothing sacred in his walk and conversation. He noticed the conductor stare at him, and then he heard the conductor talking with the driver in this way:—Conductor: "Bill, there's Cawdinal Menning inside." Driver: "You're a blank liar." Conductor: "I tell you there is." Driver: "And I tell you there isn't, and I'll bet you a pint." Conductor: "Done." Then the conductor came down from the top and approached the old gentleman with much deference, saying, "Beg pawdon, sir, but me and my mite has a little difference of opinion about you—you *are* Cawdinal Menning, ain't you?" On this the old gentleman, who was very peppery and short-tempered, turned on him and with a burst of horribly profane imprecations consigned the poor fellow to everlasting perdition. The conductor immediately scrambled up the steps again and bawled out, "It *is* his Holiness, Bill." In the present day, however, there is but little fun in the lives of those who drive 'buses or those who collect the fares. With them life is real and life is earnest, and this is particularly the case with the driver. He has no time for the long and elaborate displays of verbal fireworks which could be, and were, indulged in by his more leisurely predecessor. In one of his earlier novels, I think it was in *By Celia's Arbour*, Besant describes some man as swearing at some particular individual, then swearing at large and at the elements, and ending up with a series of muttered and growled curses

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which sounded as though he was firing volleys of oaths down his own throat. There was a time when 'bus-drivers could enjoy such opportunities, but we live in days in which everything is being shortened—speeches, sermons, leading articles, and so on—and the 'bus-man's curse must now be short, sharp, and decisive—or, as some would say, brief, bright, and brotherly—or it is lost. So he has cultivated a condensed or staccato style, sincere, pithy, and monosyllabic, and his oaths resemble the prayers uttered at the burial of Sir John Moore in being "few and short," though there the resemblance ends.

He has many trials also to irritate him and many strains on his nerve. The fact is that though motor traffic has become so common as to make the horse seem to belong rather to the age of the ichthyosaurus or the mastodon, there are still many gentlemen of the old school, jog-trot stick-in-the-muds, who regard motor-cars and taxi-cabs as new-fangled inventions. Some ten or a dozen years ago, when these things were mentioned in the House of Commons they were styled hateful infernal machines. I remember hearing the late Mr Labouchere, when he was between seventy and eighty years of age, complaining that as he was trying to cross a street one of these "devilish abominations made me skip back like a young ram, sir." This feeling of dislike induces people to put the drivers to all sorts of unnecessary trouble. Folk will saunter

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across the street without looking one way or another and expect to be unhurt. And complaints are being continually made in Parliament about the speed of motor-'buses and taxi-cabs. Of course no one suggests that these vehicles should be allowed to tear along at the speed of an express train through crowded streets, but, on the other hand, it is absurd to suggest that traffic should be made to crawl at a funeral pace because of a few old-fashioned cranks. People who live in a great and busy city cannot expect to moon about as though they were in the middle of Salisbury Plain. If they yearn for the alleged pleasures of the simple and quiet life, there are plenty of villages in which they can stand about and contemplate, in the congenial society of the village idiot, a goose on a green or a duck on a pond. I admit that the disappearance of the festive old 'bus-driver and the comminatory cabby has lessened the public stock of harmless pleasure, just as I acknowledge that the dodo was a worthy fowl. But they have gone—they had to go—and as they are dead I will say nothing but good about them. It is as impossible and as undesirable to call them back again as it is to restore the Heptarchy. And now that the hansom is dead we may cry, "Long live the taxi!"—now that the old deliberate knife-board 'bus is to be seen only in the London Museum we may exclaim, "Oh, motor-'bus, live for ever." May their wheels whirl merrily on our streets, and may the cheery



THE APOTHEOSIS OF THE HANSON

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“toot, toot” cause the lazy and the stupid to prance
out of the way or take the consequences and for ever
hold their peace. And as a last remark perhaps I may
be allowed to add that in all my allusions to drivers
of different sorts I have not once
used the word “Jehu.”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

WOMAN, MAN & THE DODO

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH OF WOMAN, MAN, AND THE DODO

THERE ARE MANY THOUGHTFUL OBSERVERS who are of opinion that man is doomed to extinction at no distant date; that he will be first of all superseded by woman—pressed out of existence by her, a pleasing fate!—and that then she also will disappear, so that the human race will follow the dodo and the great auk to nothingness. I have sometimes thought that it would be well if man could perish at once rather than go through the changes which some writers think are in store for him. Let the reader muse upon this description by Mr H. G. Wells of the man of the future :—

Eyes large, lustrous, beautiful, soulful ; above them, no longer separated by rugged brow-ridges, is the top of the head—a glistening, hairless dome, terete and beautiful; no craggy nose arises to disturb the symmetry of the calm face; no vestigial ears project; the mouth is a small, perfectly round aperture, toothless and gumless, jawless, unanimal, no futile emotions disturbing its roundness as it lies, like the harvest moon or the evening star, in the wide firmament of the face.

I am a firm believer in the old proverb which teaches that there should be no dispute in regard to matters of taste, and I daresay that the man described in the passage quoted may some day be regarded as the final climax of manly beauty. At present, however,

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we have not been trained to accept a perfectly bald gentleman, without eyebrows, without nose and without ears, as the winner in a beauty competition. Any old nose is better than none, and "paradoxical though it may appear" (as the curate said), it is still true that a man without ears is looked upon as eerie. It is interesting, however, to notice that in spite of all the important changes mentioned, one sound old characteristic will remain, for the mouth of the man of the future, though only a little one, will "lie" in the midst of his face. Before I go on to enlarge on the undoubted fact that man is being superseded by woman—a fact made clearer than ever by the recent census—it may be well to ask, what is "a man"? All kinds of answers have been attempted, and the poets have certainly tried to give a reply. The worst of the poets is that their view differs with their moods. For instance, Shakespeare, in a happy and possibly festive after-dinner moment, declared that man is noble in reason and infinite in faculties, express and admirable in form and moving, like an angel in action and like a god in apprehension. It is evident that the bard was feeling good when he wrote that. He looked on man with a glad eye: but before long Shakespeare reconsidered his position. I am of opinion that it was the morning after that handsome tribute, when he was suffering from that tired feeling, that he snapped out that man is most ignorant of what he's most assured,

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he is like an angry ape playing fantastic tricks and making the angels weep. Thus it is useless to seek for definite information about man from the poets.

It may be thought by some that the scientists will be better guides—but if you ask a scientist to explain what a man is he tells you something of this sort. A man is a mammal, and the position of the face immediately beneath the brain is one of his peculiar characteristics. Again, his foot is, in proportion to the size of the whole body, larger and broader than that of any other mammal—and this is made as a general statement and not in regard to policemen in particular. Then the scientist in describing a man tells us that he is two-handed, that he has a diaphragm, that he has the faculty of opposing the thumb to the other fingers (and to the nose also), that he has knee-joints, a collar bone, and so on and so forth. No doubt all these details are correct, but if some inhabitant of another planet tried to imagine a man from this fragmentary description the result would be a comical failure. The late Mr Andrew Lang had a poor opinion of anthropology, in spite of the poet's dictum that the proper study of mankind is man. Mr Lang says somewhere that this science is to the man in the street foolishness, to the academic don a stumbling-block, to a scientific character a half-baked, shady kind of science, not much better than psychical research or stamp collecting.

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We may therefore leave anthropology—and if anyone wants to know more about it I can refer him to a pleasing treatise on the subject by Immanuel Kant. Part I of that work (which I have not read and have no intention of reading) consists of Anthropological Didactic, or instructions for learning both the interior and exterior of man, while Part II is Anthropological Characteristic, or the way to find out the interior from the exterior. As Immanuel Kant was a terrible bore, he would probably be an expert in this latter part of the business. But, as I have already hinted, I am not concerned so much with all that side or aspect of the subject as with the plain fact that in this country, at any rate, men are decreasing in numbers and in size and women are increasing. If this goes on it follows as the night the day that men will become fewer and fewer, and smaller and smaller, until they have to be searched for like radium with microscopes, while women will be all over the place, if I may use a colloquialism. It is all very well for men to say that though women now outnumber men in this country by about a million, this makes no difference, or should make no difference, to the lordship of man. This sort of thing cannot go on without upsetting the equilibrium or the balance of power. Let us assume that the population of these islands is forty millions—I believe it is now more than that, but the number suggested is convenient for my purpose. Let us also suppose that men

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had gone on diminishing in numbers until only one was left, and that the other 39,999,999 persons were women—who would say that the one man, possibly a little bit of a fellow, should rule over all the other people? Yet unless that position be maintained it is evident that there is a surrender to the right of the majority to rule over the minority, and if that surrender be made, then the women ought to be in command to-day.

It has sometimes seemed to me that man may learn a lesson from the gentle dodo, in so many respects his prototype. The male dodo not only was a fool, but he also looked a fool. Here is a description of the fowl by one who knew the family well: "He hath a great, ill-favoured head, a prominent fat neck, an extraordinary long bill. He gapes huge and wide as being naturally very voracious. His body is fat and round, and he is slow-paced and stupid." The type may be extinct among birds, but it survives among men. Most of us have met men who answer to the description—the extraordinary long bills suggesting some impatient tradesman. These are the men who are endangering our sex supremacy by their stupidity and slowness. The female dodo was in every way superior to her foolish, slow-witted mate, as may be gathered from this report taken from Francis Lequet's *New Voyage to the East Indies* in 1708:—

The female dodos are wonderfully beautiful,

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some fair, some brown; I call them fair because they are of the colour of fair hair. Not one feather is straggling from another all over their bodies, being very careful to adjust themselves and make all even. They walk with so much stateliness and good grace that one cannot help admiring them and loving them, by which means they often save their lives.

And so we find that just as the male was ill-favoured, clumsy, voracious, and stupid, the female was very particular in regard to her dress or feathers, was very beautiful, walked with good grace, and saved her life by inspiring affection. I need not point out the close resemblance thus shown between these curious birds and human beings. Nor have I finished with the female dodo, for the ingenious traveler adds:—

Though they will sometimes very familiarly come up near enough to one when we do not run after them, yet they will never grow tame, and as soon as they are caught they shed tears without crying.

The resemblance is so close as to be absolutely photographic in its fidelity. The she dodo survived the male because of her prepossessing appearance, and in the same way woman is likely to outlast man for a time. What says Mrs Eyre Macklin of the well-dressed woman of to-day? "She is a being of elongated, slop-

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ing curves. There is no suggestion even of an angle on which one could hang a description of where one part begins and another ends. She just flows." I suppose the good old Pope who said *non angli sed angeli* really meant that there should be no angles on the angels. As the lady says, "woman just flows," and one feels inclined to say of her in the words of Sir John Denham :

"Oh, could I flow like thee, . . .

Though deep yet clear ; though gentle yet not dull,
Strong without rage. . . ."

Poor man does not flow—he stumps his way through life, and as to being free from angles, many a man is so angular in build as to suggest a mixture of the Gothic and the Early English styles. We have seen that the gentleman dodo lost in the race of life and was knocked on the head because he was ill-favoured, while the lady dodo survived because of her attractive appearance. Men are beginning to make pathetic attempts to improve upon nature. Not very long ago I saw boldly displayed in a shop window in Cologne some articles described as "Herren Corset" or men's stays, for civilians and military men ! It may be that before long men will have to submit to the crowning humiliation of the toque. Of course I am quite aware that stern moralists have always taught that outward appearance is of small importance, that handsome is as handsome does, and that beauty is only skin-deep.

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There was once a very worthy lady who wrote this moralising sentiment :

“ 'Tis a credit to any good girl to be neat,
But quite a disgrace to be fine,”

It may be so—though Charles Lamb made rollicking fun of such views, and I will undertake to say that the two lines I have quoted never influenced for one moment any girl who had the chance of making herself fine. So far as men are concerned I am afraid they are hopelessly played out in this form of competition, and so year by year they grow fewer and fewer in numbers, while woman looms larger and larger in size and in numbers also. The day which I have mentioned must come if this goes on, when only one man will be left amid the millions of his conquerors. The position might have some advantages, but it would have its embarrassments also — a fact that I doubt not was often brought home to the last he dodo as he waddled awkwardly among his stately and graceful superiors.

Let no one suppose that I am unduly pessimistic about the comparative status of woman and man, for when woman supersedes man and snuffs him out we shall be reverting to a state of things as it was in the beginning. I am not relying on the statements of women, which might be regarded as prejudiced, or influenced by bias, whether conscious or unconscious. The confident male reader may well ponder over these

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pronouncements from the pens of male scientists :—
(i.) Professor Charles Hurst states that “the male has arisen as a defective variation from the female.” Here we have a hint at a view favoured by Robert Burns, who declared that man was the product of a “prentice hand,” and that after this more or less successful experiment it proceeded to make “the lasses.” It is true that Burns suggests that man came first, whereas the Professor says he was second—but they both agree that he was quite inferior. (ii.) Professor Albrecht has described males as “rudimentary females”; while (iii.) Professor Lester F. Ward goes even further in his view that “the male was primarily and normally an inconspicuous and insignificant afterthought of nature,” a statement that should satisfy even the most advanced woman. I have seen it stated that Dr Samuel Butler has conclusively proved that the *Odyssey* is the work of a woman—and I, for one, am quite content that it should be so. Nor am I much concerned by the announcement that Professor Harnack, the leader of the Higher Criticism movement, is certain that a lady named Priscilla wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews—but such claims will very likely upset gentlemen of the old school. Before long we shall have, I doubt not, some conclusive arguments showing that, whoever may have written *Hamlet* and those other plays we hear so much about, they are most certainly the work of a woman. Thus when man is eclipsed and

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superseded by woman, he will revert to the original condition of things. He was first of all, it seems, "an inconspicuous and insignificant afterthought," and he is even now regarded as a played-out back-number, and a miserable "has-been."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
ON ARTISTS

CHAPTER FOURTEEN ON ARTISTS

SOME LITTLE TIME AGO A LAW COURT was called on to decide the question—what is manual labour?—and there were some who held that even the most distinguished artists, including the President of the Royal Academy, were engaged in manual labour. This view was certainly favoured by that honest visitor to a famous picture gallery who pointed to an extensive oil painting and said with something like awe, “I’m told that the paint on one of them things comes to a matter of five pounds, let alone man’s time laying it on.” And Thackeray, who loved and studied this branch of art, has declared :

The posing of figures and drapery ; the dexterous copying of the line ; the artful processes of cross-hatching, of stumping, of laying on lights and what not ; the arrangement of colour, and the pleasing operations of glazing and the like, are labours for the most part merely manual.

I am not stating this as my own opinion—indeed, if one were to push the point to an extreme, it could be argued that poets who write, orators who convince more by thumping a table than by the spoken word, pick-pockets, prize-fighters, barbers, dentists, surgeons, and many others, are all manual labourers. The same may be said of the President of the United States when he shakes hands with three thousand citizens, and it is equally true of each of the three thousand.

There was a time when all artists were regarded

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as picturesque and not too clean Bohemians, wearing sombreros and faded velvet jackets. To revert once more to Thackeray—how that great novelist delighted to refer to the ferocious “mustachios” (as he persisted in calling them) of the artists, and the huge beards down to their waists! All this is, I am told, altered to-day, and the modern artist is often a spick-and-span clean-shaven gentleman, rejoicing in what is known as the “frockcoat figure,” carrying a neatly rolled umbrella, wearing a tall silk hat, and, ye gods! light-coloured spats. It is said that were it not for our modern curates the large moustache would have become extinct. There was once an Oxford don who, when asked if he was an authority on science, made reply, “I know nothing about it—I don’t even teach it.” In the same way I may say that I am profoundly ignorant about art, but in spite of that I do not criticise it. And I detest the “honest fellow” who, while proclaiming that he may not be an expert, always adds, “But I know what I like.” It generally happens that what such a man likes is something far inferior to the average oleograph in merit.

There is a certain number of gentlemen who are turned loose every year to “do” the Royal Academy for the Press, and these gentlemen take themselves very seriously. They stalk through the rooms, they “rake” the works of art, they make little notes in the catalogue, and later on they sum up, find a verdict and pass



THE LADY WHO "DOES" FOR YOU

ON ARTISTS

sentence. Some people think that the artist's world is one of peace and tranquillity, but the fact is, controversy rages in every world. Politicians have their rows (the greater part of political work consisting in calling names); theologians have their sacred "scraps"; there are storms in the world of literature (as witness the bloodthirsty feuds between the Shakespearians and the Baconians), and scientists snap at each other viciously—but to the outsider the gentle occupation of the painter of pictures suffers from no disturbances of this sort. In the same way the smiling surface of the summer sea suggests peace, and yet down below there is an eternal state of affairs worse than Chicago. I remember being the innocent cause of a very lively time in a club frequented by artists, and all I did was to ask the question, "After all—what is art?" The gentlemen present smiled at one another as if pitying my ignorance, and each began, quietly enough, to answer the question in his own way. But soon clouds began to appear on the horizon, there were sudden squalls, the combat deepened (if I may vary the metaphor), the action became general, as general as it used to be at Donnybrook Fair, wicked words were used and more wicked looks exchanged. The supposed gentle artists raved about the Romanesque style and the Flemish school, the Romanticists of Germany and the pre-Raphaelites of England, and long before they had finished with the Renaissance

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they had their livid faces close together, and were exchanging desperate curses in panting whispers.

And after all they had not really answered my question—What is art? The instinct of self-preservation led me to agree warmly with everything that was said by everybody, for at such a time the mahl-stick (surely it should be maul-stick) is mightier than the sword or the poleaxe. So I left them turning the air blue about the Renaissance, and I went off to consult a dictionary furtively. Here I found that art is "whatever has been made by man, as opposed to what is natural." Here is a wide definition, and if it be accepted we must regard a tramp's trousers as art, and also Aldgate pump, Ludgate Hill Station, a motor-bus, my hat, and thousands of other things which would certainly be repudiated by my frantic friends whose little differences of opinion I have noticed. Another definition of art declares it to be "the visible expression of the sublime and beautiful"; but that is of no service, since it is notoriously impossible to decide what is beautiful and what is not. Even in regard to female beauty the standard varies in different regions, and there are parts of the world in which the flatter and broader a lady's nose is the more anxious the producers of picture postcards are to get her face as a copyright picture. Who shall say, who has the right to say, whether a squashed-in and flattened-out nose is more or is less sublime and beautiful than

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the other sort? The fact is it is impossible for an outsider to decide what is art and what is not. And it is useless to appeal to the artists themselves, or if you do it is well at the same time to ring up a few ambulances. Supposing for a moment that you could discover a picture as to which all men everywhere would agree to the verdict, "There is no art in that"—the man who did it, who perpetrated it, could say with force and reason, "Art consists in concealing art—I have evidently concealed it so successfully that none of you can detect it, and that is a proof of my art." In this way it may be urged that everything is art; but we will keep to pictures, and here we find that they all come within the ambit of the phrase. If art is obvious—well, there it is; if it eludes detection by the keenest and most friendly eye, then it is concealed, and that fact shows its existence.

In my intercourse with artists I have heard much about "masterpieces"—and this is another term which has various and curious meanings. I have never dared to submit the question—"What is a masterpiece?"—to a gathering of artists owing to the painful results of my asking them to decide what art is, and so I have had to consult the lexicographer once more. According to that authority a masterpiece is "a performance superior to anything else done by the same person." Supposing I were to paint two or three pictures, they would all be bad, nay, shocking—I do

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not mean improper, but appalling so far as lack of merit is concerned. Yet it is inconceivable that they would all be equally bad. There would be one just a shade less bad than the others, and in this way it would answer or conform to the requirements of the definition in being a "performance superior to anything else done by the same person." In other words, it would be my masterpiece, my *chef d'œuvre*, something of which, if I had no reason to be proud, I might at least be less ashamed than of other inferior productions. I once heard a golfer say of his play that however bad a stroke he made he always found consolation in the reflection that it might have been worse—and I suppose the same may be said about pictures.

I have no desire to make it appear that artists as a class are given to the use of bad language to an unusual degree, for I should say this is not so. But I have heard some of them use great plainness of speech about the Hanging Committee of the Royal Academy, even as in another sphere gentlemen whose articles are rejected by soulless editors dance with rage and invoke all sorts of curses on those able men. No doubt the members of the Hanging Committee resemble the Western musician who did his best, but it is certain that pictures have been rejected which were better than some which have been accepted. That is unavoidable—inevitable, nor does it prove any act of moral turpitude against that much maligned body.

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Some years ago, when the Royal Aquarium still cheered and blessed the world at Westminster, the directors of the place resolved to have an exhibition of works of art that had been sent in to Burlington House and had been rejected. I went to see this forlorn Legion of the Damned, exposed to that fierce light that blackens every blot, and I was much moved as I looked on these works of art which were, so far as the Royal Academy is concerned, unhonoured and unhung. As I have said, in spite of the fact that I know nothing about art, I have with rare abnegation abstained from being an art critic, and so all I will say is that there did not appear to me to be much difference between some of the pictures shut out of Burlington House and some let in. But there were others that made even me jump. There were some far inferior to those striking representations of a slice of salmon, or a sunset at sea, with which the pavement artist adorns our streets. In more than one case I remember saying to myself, "That daub cannot be a masterpiece, for the word suggests something better than other productions by the same person, and it would be impossible to imagine—it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive—anything worse than that." As to one work of art, I can assure the reader that what I am about to relate is absolutely true—nay, I do not mind confessing that I could not have concocted it, the notion would not have occurred

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to me. A lady had with scissors snipped out of cardboard the representation of a gentleman with tall hat and frockcoat complete. Then with pen and ink she had cunningly added nose and eyes, moustache and so forth, and then, no doubt with high and confident hope, she had sent her treasure to run the gauntlet of that envious Hanging Committee. The wretches refused it! I can imagine them exclaiming in the words of Shakespeare :

“O horror ! horror ! horror ! tongue nor heart
Cannot conceive nor name thee !
Confusion now hath made his masterpiece.”

And thus was an undoubted product of home industry rejected. Yet anyone could see at a glance what it was that the lady meant to represent by her effort, and that is more than can be said of many an ambitious work that cumpers the walls of the Royal Academy.

Some years ago I spent one of the most pleasant evenings I can remember taking supper in an artists' club in Glasgow. I was allowed to address them on art, and I founded my little speech on an incident I had witnessed in the streets of that lovely city. I put the case in this way : “ I believe that in all great works of art there should be some figure or some object which attracts the eye, unconsciously perhaps, some dominating feature, around which everything else is grouped. To-day I saw on one of your pave-

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ments some brilliantly coloured work, and the whole of the surrounding details led up to the central object, which was an ancient tall hat standing on its crown, pathetically, nay, more than pathetically, imperiously, demanding alms. It struck me, gentlemen, as art in the truest sense." Scotsmen, even Scottish artists, are practical men, and my hosts asked me if the appeal of the hat was successful, and I assured them that bawbees dropped into that venerable interior even as the gentle rain from heaven. My friends were impressed, for they said, with evident feeling, that the man who could make his pictures pay, whether they were produced on canvas, or on the cold flagstones of a Glasgow street, was indeed, and in the truest sense of the word, an artist.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
THE CLERGY

TWO OR THREE YEARS AGO IT WAS said that there was a serious shortage in the supply of curates, and as the curate may be described as the reverend raw material from which that more finished article, the rector, or even the bishop, is produced, the report was one that might well give pause to those who are interested in the Church as a going concern. I am unable to say whether more curates are now obtainable, but it is certain that church curates have altered considerably in pattern, if the phrase may be used, during recent years. Everyone knows Sydney Smith's remark that "there is something which excites compassion in the very name of a curate," and long after the Canon's day Gilbert's song, "I was a pale young curate then," showed the sort of article that was in demand. That enterprising and speculative Hebrew, Mr Sherrick, in *The Newcomes*, who "ran" a fashionable Christian church, no doubt expressed the general view when he said, "The women like a consumptive parson, sir." We have changed all that, however, and many a modern curate can play football, and can box in a manner that would prove remarkably striking to some of his critics who might thoughtlessly "take him on." Mr G. W. E. Russell, who is an expert in curates, has said that so far from the modern curate exciting compassion,

He is almost offensively prosperous—young, strong, healthy, active, boisterously cheerful, ag-

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gressively "breezy." His very appearance checks the stream of compassion at its source. One cannot pity a fellow-creature who looks so well pleased with himself and his world.

In other words, the young cleric is generally a "sport" in the unobjectionable sense. He is to the Church what the middy is to the navy. He has a soul above croquet, and he prefers a pipe (there is generally a well-blackened specimen in his pocket) to afternoon tea in a drawing-room.

Of course there are "wrong 'uns" among curates as in all other classes. John Bright said many years ago that there is a residuum in every class, and he specially mentioned the clergy in this connection. And the wrong sort of curate, the budding clerical prig, is indeed a grievous specimen. Some time ago certain worthy people suggested that in order to put an end to the shortage which then troubled the Church there should be "artisan curates." Of course no one can object to this proposal unless he is prepared to say right out that the clerical profession is to be kept as a social preserve. It may be that no one should object to a curate who tied string round his trousers below the knee and who addressed his flock from the pulpit as "mateys, one and all." A man might do all this, tying a coloured handkerchief round his reverend neck, and yet be of the salt of the earth. But I doubt if such a type would be generally acceptable.

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Moreover, we must not forget our old friend, the thin end of the wedge, and if artisan curates were "signed on," why not artisan deans and working-men bishops? At the same time, the artisan curate would be better than what I may call the curatical snob or bounder, of whom there are some, though they form but a fraction, a vulgar fraction, of the whole class.

No doubt there is a real difference that can be explained by ecclesiastical experts between a vicar and a rector, but it has always seemed to me to be the sort of difference that exists between a crocodile and an alligator. These gentlemen are, after all, human, and they are therefore not faultless. While they may have a right to speak, each one of them, of "my parish" and "my people," it often seems as though they sympathised with the duke of other days who said he had a right to do as he liked with his own. I am bound to say that they are rather encouraged in these airs of proprietorship by the fact that many people, chiefly women, seem to enjoy being ordered about by a parson. There is many a rural rector who is more of an autocrat than is the Czar. His territory is no doubt smaller, but his oversight and personal rule is more direct and rigid. And the worst of it is, some of these parsons are not content with laying down the law from the pulpit on matters of doctrine. They will go about interfering in the everyday life of people who want to be left alone, but who dare not say so. In large

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towns, of course, the difficulty does not arise, but the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of parsons. There are villages in which it goes ill with a small girl who fails to curtsy to the rector, or the young urchin who forgets to make his "bob." These little salutations are pleasing and proper if rendered voluntarily, but I cannot see why they should be enforced. And the parson who is the most stern in exacting these attentions is generally the most eager to show excessive deference to men of high rank.

I remember hearing the late Mr Grant Allen tell a tale about a good clergyman who was much distressed by having to choose between what he at first regarded as a dereliction of duty and a neglect of the social amenities. It was in those days when that most estimable and learned man, Charles Darwin, was looked upon by the ordinary run of the clergy as a man of sin. From many a pulpit the scientist was denounced with frantic zeal by worthy and reverend gentlemen who had never read his books, and would not have understood them in any case. Now Darwin was a man of "family," as the phrase goes, and he took a house in a certain neighbourhood. The local parson shuddered at the news, as if the Evil One himself had in actual embodied form become a parishioner. The reader need not think I am exaggerating, for that feeling was commonly prevalent among the clergy at one time, and that time not very long ago. It is a well-known

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fact that soon after a memorial to Darwin had been erected in Shrewsbury, a church tower was blown down in a storm and injured the roof of the sacred edifice. Thereupon a local clergyman proclaimed aloud, with obvious sincerity, his view that the incident was a manifestation of the wrath of Heaven against a town which had allowed itself to be polluted or desecrated by an erection in honour of the memory of this unbeliever ! Let us return, however, to the other parson who found himself an unwilling neighbour of Darwin. Of course the reverend gentleman and his wife resolved they would not disgrace themselves, or the cause of the Church, by visiting such a monster. But it was soon revealed to the watchful eye of the clergyman's wife that the very best county people were visiting the man of sin, and she was much troubled—not because they went, but because she could not go and meet them. So she laid her difficulties before her reverend spouse, hinting that though it would be a sad trial, still they owed it to themselves as a duty to conquer their feelings and call on the unbelieving wretch. The parson was as adamant and said "Never." Of course the reader will foresee how such a little domestic controversy would end. There came an afternoon when the parson's wife saw the carriage of a countess drive up to the house of the unorthodox old gentleman, and her heart was sick within her. Once more she tackled her lord and said that they really

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must visit the impious scientist. The clergyman was himself rather impressed when he heard about the countess, and so at last he said: "Well, my dear, if it must be so, it must—but understand this, if that man stands up in his house in my presence and blasphemes aloud, I shall leave at once." History does not relate the sequel, but I think it may be safely assumed that old Mr Darwin did not blaspheme aloud in his own drawing-room. The tale is valuable as illustrating that spirit of deference which the clergy often show toward people of good social position.

I have often wondered what exactly is meant by the phrase "rural dean." The title suggests the countryside, and the dignitary conjured up resembles a sort of ecclesiastical Jesse Collings, but I believe the word "rural" is not to be understood as meaning "rustic" or Hodge-like in this connection. Some light is thrown on the matter by Stephens in his *Laws relating to the Clergy* where he says:

The fourth dean is he who is usually called the rural dean, having no absolute judicial power in himself, but he is to order the ecclesiastical affairs within his deanery and precinct, by the direction of the bishop or archdeacon, and is a substitute of the bishop in many cases.

Somehow or other this description suggests a rather second-rate personage—but it is well known that all deans have a very good opinion of themselves, it may



THE REVEREND GENT

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be with reason. It must have been a dean in the days of Charles II. who is reported to have wound up a sermon at Whitehall in this way :

In short, if you don't live up to the precepts of the Gospel, but abandon yourselves to your irregular appetites, you must expect to receive your reward in a certain place which 'tis not good manners to mention here.

Pope must have been thinking of a similar character, or perhaps of the same divine, when he wrote :

“To rest, the cushion and soft dean invite,
Who never mentions Hell to ears polite.”

I have shown that whatever a rural dean may really be, he does not seem to be given any real authority, or not much, and this view is borne out by this curious description given in a book entitled *The Parson's Outlook*, by the Rev. W. G. Edwards Rees, himself an Anglican clergyman : “A rural dean is an amphibological ecclesiastical functionary, who wears a distinctive hat, to signify a show of authority, but who is denied the luxury of gaiters, in order that his real impotence may be manifest.” The same author announces a curious discovery in regard to archdeacons, concerning whom I scorn to repeat the mouldy old saying about archidiaconal functions. He says that all archdeacons are always fifty-eight years of age. It is a curious and even a mysterious truth, but the reverend author states explicitly :

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The mean age of archdeacons is always fifty-eight. If you meet a pair of archidiaconal gaiters in an omnibus, you will find on inquiry that the wearer of them is hovering about fifty-eight. If you make the acquaintance of an archdeacon in the pages of a popular novel, you will discover him midway through his twelfth lustre. It is the bloom and flowering time of the archidiaconal career, the high flood-tide of an archdeacon's course.

This is a matter beyond argument or explanation ; it is a dogmatic assertion by a gentleman in holy orders, and must therefore be accepted with meekness ; it is a statement which I

“ By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where I cannot prove.”

Everyone knows that an archdeacon has been described as the “bishop's eye,” but it is a mistake to suppose that a self-respecting bishop would refer to one of these worthy men as “all my eye.” There has been a curious struggle for mastery between archdeacons and deans. In earlier days archdeacons were sent on confidential missions by the bishop because they had about them a pliability wanting in the suffragans, and in the end the archdeacon superseded the more dignified but less bending functionaries. That was in other days and in other lands ; but a learned writer has said that the same drama was re-enacted on Eng-

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lish soil between the archdeacons and the rural deans, the latter, who were at first higher in position than their rivals, being now regarded as inferior to them in rank. Have we not seen that the archdeacon has gaiters, while a rural dean is denied those ornamental luxuries? Let me add, in justice to some very distinguished men, that "an ordinary or full dean, as contradistinguished from a rural dean, is admittedly superior to an archdeacon." There is a finering about that phrase, "a full dean"—it suggests a man of weight and of capacity, and it contains a hint at repletion.

I will stop at archdeacons and deans, for bishops are high, and I cannot attain unto them. To say that they are respectable men would be ludicrously inadequate. Gone are the days when one could write as Pepys wrote in 1667: "My Lady Castlemayne hath made a Bishop lately, namely her uncle, Dr Glenham, who I think they say is Bishop of Carlisle, a drunken, swearing rascal, and a scandal to the Church." Samuel probably referred to Dr Glenham, who was made Bishop of St Asaph—the names of the divine and of the diocese were wrong, but probably the little character sketch may stand. As to archbishops in England, they must to-day possess many great gifts and graces—and it is essential that they be Scotsmen.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN
ENGLISH SCULPTURE

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH ABOUT ENGLISH SCULPTURE

TO DERIDE AND ABUSE MODERN ENGLISH sculpture is regarded by many as the beginning of wisdom in art criticism. Anything old in this form of art is hailed as necessarily superior to anything new, and yet such a rough-and-ready way of pronouncing sentence often leads to ludicrous miscarriages of justice. For instance, I maintain that the bronze horse in the Duke of Cambridge's statue near the Horse Guards is a far more life-like and artistic piece of work than the bronze horse on which the effigy of Charles I. sits not many yards away. I know that I shall be denounced as a Philistine or a Goth for saying this, but that is my considered judgment. At the same time, I admit that the monuments in the streets of London are not things of beauty. Why cannot we have something equal to the superb figure of Scott in Princes Street, Edinburgh, or to the charming bronze figures of Burke and Goldsmith outside Trinity College in Dublin? Our effigies of public men are so stiff and rigid that they make one ache in sympathy with them. And this stiffness or rigidity has caused me to make a proposal which has not yet been received with gladness in art circles—my suggestion being that we should have movable statuary. I do not mean that the statues should be moved from place to place, but that they should work their limbs.

Every new idea has shocked most people when first

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promulgated, but I ask the reader to consider my scheme carefully before dismissing it. I fear I shall be regarded as using the language of the dinner-table bore when I say that mechanical science has made huge strides in the last few years, but it is necessary to remind the reader of this fact at the outset. We have all seen those ingenious toys, little tin men that are made to walk along the pavement, or to exercise themselves in other ways. Now, the cunning inventors of these things could do much to enliven our streets if they would apply their skill to giving us animated statues. Take the group of statesmen whose bronze figures stand eternally motionless in Parliament Square—how much more realistic these would be if they were made to work their arms with oratorical gestures as the originals did in life! Again, not far from them stands the life-size representation of the late Duke of Devonshire. I do not suggest that he should be wound up so as to indulge in animated movements, for that would be inappropriate in his case. But what a hit the artist would have made had he so arranged matters that the rigid jaws of the eminent man were to open slowly ever and anon in a characteristic yawn! The tale about that nobleman yawning in the middle of one of his own speeches has been told a thousand times, but I prefer the other, which relates that he was the only man who ever dreamed that he was addressing the House of Commons, and then woke up and

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found it was true. If his statue could be made to yawn at intervals it would be well, and on the pedestal might be carved certain words which he once uttered with undoubted sincerity—"What this country needs is a period of repose."

The same idea could be carried out in connection with other monuments. Thus great soldiers could be made to salute, or mark time with their feet. A few steps of the hornpipe by Nelson would be appropriate and would relieve the monotony of himself and others. Indeed, enlarging and improving on the model set by the little tin men who walk about, there is no reason why we should not have a procession of mechanically propelled bronze heroes stepping out round and round Trafalgar Square. Of course such demonstrations would be reserved for special occasions—gala days and days of national rejoicing. There is no reason whatever why we should be tied down to a slavish imitation of the ancients in our style of statuary—we ought to hit out a line of our own. Thus we might in some way make use of electric light in connection with these gloomy figures. During the night, and also during many hours of the day at some seasons of the year, they are invisible—I know flippant people will say "Thank Heaven," but if only their eyes were illuminated it would be better than nothing. Electricians could easily do this, and could even make them wink if necessary, while in the case of naval heroes a red

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left eye and a green right one would pleasingly suggest port and starboard. A writer on Greek statuary and sculpture declares that in the very best period of art, foreign substances, either metal, precious stones, paste or glass, were introduced to form eyes in statues and busts. We may be sure that those who thus enlivened their work would have added the undoubted effect of illuminated eyes had electric light then been known. The authorities might find it useful to announce lighting-up time each evening by switching on the eyelights of monuments in public places.

There is a great deal of nonsense talked about the severity of taste among the ancients in matters of art. The Romans went in for wax-works on a large scale. Noble families used to preserve portraits of their ancestors in this way, and these works of art were kept in an apartment in their palaces specially appropriated to this pious purpose. When a funeral took place in good society in Rome, the wax images of the ancestors of the deceased were carried in front of the corpse as a mark of honour. Somehow or other cultured people to-day look down on wax-works. Even those remarkable specimens of art, waxen representations of fruit and flowers, which were as common as the family Bible in the drawing-rooms of good Queen Victoria's day, have been banished in these later years. I am not advocating a revival of them, or of the wax images which the great and conquering Romans

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did not disdain to admire. But wax has one great advantage over other materials—it can be melted and used again. Now this brings me to another suggestion. We all know that fame is fleeting, while bronze endures, and so it often happens that we come across effigies in our streets that have overstayed their welcome. Monuments have been erected to men who were regarded as wonders in their day—but now one wonders who they were. I believe there are images in existence in London which puzzle even the most learned antiquaries—nobody knowing whom they are supposed to represent. I once asked a 'bus-conductor if he could tell me the name of a corpulent bronze hero in a busy street, and he said, "I couldn't take my oath of it—but I've always took the party to be Nelson." As the "party" was shown riding a horse, wearing top boots and spurs, it struck me that my friendly 'bus-conductor had been misled—but the incident proves what I have said—some of these "immortals" have been completely forgotten.

I am not going to suggest that they should be melted down as if they were wax, and remoulded into someone else, as this would involve much time and trouble. My plan is that there should be a scheme by which, while the main part of the statue is retained, new heads should be fixed on from time to time. Let me give an illustration—there is near the Royal Exchange in the city a good solid statue of Mr Pea-

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body, the philanthropist. He was an excellent man, and one of the salt of the earth—yet I think he may be said to have had a fair innings by this time. He is represented as sitting in a chair, wearing a frock-coat, trousers, and good serviceable boots. It is perhaps not the most bewitching work of art that the brain of man has conceived or his cunning hand executed—but it is eminently a general purpose body, the body of a respectable citizen appropriately clothed. Therefore it lends itself happily to my suggested experiment. I do not lay down any fixed rules, or any rules at all, but merely throw out a hint, and it is this—the Peabody head might be removed, and the head of the Lord Mayor for the year could be affixed in its place. This would be an annual affair, and putting the head of the chief magistrate on the trunk of the statue in question might be made part of the celebrations on 9th November. Of course I admit that some taste and sense would have to be shown in selecting other statues for such treatment. It would not do to fix the head of some peaceable Quaker on the body of a mounted warrior waving a sword, such as, say, Richard Cœur de Lion, just outside the House of Lords. To do that would be to bring the whole scheme into ridicule. But, properly carried out, I am sure the plan would introduce variety into our streets, and it would also appeal to that spirit of fair play which exists in every true Briton. The man in the

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street would welcome an arrangement which would every now and then give another fellow a chance. Unless some such method is adopted, the great and good Mr Peabody, whom I sincerely admire, will remain *in situ* till the crack of doom, and it is possible to have too much of a good thing. There is another point on which I do not insist, though it is worth mentioning—it might be possible by charging a stiff price as a head rent, that is, as payment for the privilege of having one's head thus represented for a stated period, to raise a considerable sum that would go toward the reduction of rates. I fear, however, that in spite of, or perhaps I should say because of, the fact that here we have a proposal for which much can be said, and against which no solid objection can be urged, it will meet with the studied neglect of the authorities.

Even now I have not finished my suggestions for improving our street statuary and bringing it up to date. I have mentioned the possibility of movable limbs, and also of eyes flashing forth electric beams. Now I wish to remind the reader of the possibility of the gramophone as applied to statues, and particularly to those of eminent statesmen. A powerful gramophone fixed up in the great bronze image of Lord Beaconsfield, for instance, in Parliament Square might be used with tremendous effect on Primrose Day. How the faithful would be thrilled if they heard from

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those metallips the great words, "Peace with honour," or "Imperium et Libertas"! And what an animated scene the square would present if all the figures were set working together, arms waving, and mouths bawling forth favourite passages from the oratory of other days! Grim Oliver Cromwell stands outside Westminster Hall, while Charles I. looks in the direction from Charing Cross. On a still night, when the traffic has ceased, it ought not to be impossible so to arrange gramophone records in the two that they could exchange animated "back-chat." And here again I see a way in which to raise money, so as, at length, to make some of these eminent men what they never were in life—self-supporting. The slot machine might be brought in, and thus the admirers of different statesmen and heroes could set them working and speaking at a reasonable price. I am certain that the great sculptors of old would have gone in for effects of this sort if they had possessed the mechanical appliances that are within our reach, and though I daresay I shall not live to see my plan carried out (it is often the case that the inventor fails to enjoy his just reward), the good time is surely coming when our statues will no longer be dumb and motionless, but will walk, dance, gesticulate, wink, and talk, and sing in our streets.

When this consummation devoutly to be wished is attained, I hope the public will think of me.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
ENGLISH SERVANTS



CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH ABOUT ENGLISH SERVANTS

FEW WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE have a wider or more varied meaning than the word servant. It includes alike the forlorn drudge or "slavey" of the cheap lodging house and also the Cabinet Minister, as one of the oldest descriptions of members of the Cabinet is "His Majesty's servants." Generally speaking, however, the word means the domestic servant, and she rivals the weather as a topic of conversation among ladies. According to the generally prevailing view there is an *entente cordiale* existing between cooks and policemen, not exactly a formal alliance, but a good understanding cemented by gifts of cold pie and of beer. It is also an article of faith firmly held by mistresses that servant girls are in the habit of dropping articles of china or glass for the mere pleasure of seeing them break, while, on the other hand, servants maintain that these things come to pieces in their hands. The Legislature has had to notice this difference of opinion, and the law has decided that "in case the goods of the master are broken by the carelessness of the servant, the master is not entitled to deduct their value from the wages of the servant unless there has been a special contract between them to that effect."

During many centuries it has been customary for mistresses to declare that servants have been deteriorating. When someone told a certain editor of *Punch*

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that *Punch* was not then as good as it once was, the editor replied cheerily, "No, and it never was," and the same answer may be given to those who make a similar remark about servants. There is a prevailing notion, fostered by writers of fiction, to the effect that Irish servants are a happy-go-lucky lot, who make up for any deficiencies by their flashes of native humour, which keep the whole household in roars of laughter. And Scottish servants are represented as ruling over their employers in a pitiless manner. English servants cannot be labelled in this manner, as they are of all sorts, good, bad, and indifferent, intelligent and stupid, willing and lazy, treasures and trials. I believe, however, that it will be found that the average English servant is extraordinarily loyal to those who employ her so long as she is with them, however much she may revile them afterwards. She will resist fiercely any attempt at cheating on the part of a tradesman, and she is very keen about the social prestige of her master and mistress. The servant of a man who goes into town in a first-class carriage wearing a silk hat will look down on the next door servant whose master travels second class and wears a bowler. They seem to associate themselves with the affairs and interests of the family they serve in quite a personal manner, saying "we" do this or "we" would not think of doing that, declaring that the daughter of the house is better-looking, or the hats of the mistress more im-

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pressive, than any other daughters or hats in the neighbourhood.

Some years ago, when I was standing for Parliament, I came across a most touching instance of this sort of loyalty, which was the more surprising because it was exhibited by one who was not really my servant at all. A friend had lent me his motor-car, and also the driver, for the period of the contest. That driver was a typical Englishman, light-haired, red-faced, thick-set, of the type which is, whether correctly or incorrectly I know not, described as Saxon. He knew nothing, and cared nothing, about politics—but he immediately became a tremendous champion of my claims. One day I was about to go into the yard where he kept the motor, when a friend suggested that I had better not go for a few minutes, and when I asked why, he said, “Well, the fact is, John is engaged for the moment in fighting with another man.” This surprised me, as John was a good-tempered fellow, so I asked what the fight was about, and was told that some man had said that I was not likely to win the election, and that was enough to rouse John to action. A few minutes later he brought the motor round, and his general appearance suggested “something attempted, something done.” Indeed, he had completely knocked out the other man, though I may add that the other man’s forecast of the election proved to be quite accurate. Here was a case in which a man who

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was not my servant at all, that is to say, he was not in my employment, and who had no notion of what views I was advocating, yet felt that he was bound in honour to fight on my behalf.

People who have lived in India have told me tales showing that the friendly readiness of native servants to keep up the credit of the family is sometimes embarrassing in its results. A mistress will come home and announce that some people are coming to dinner, and will inquire if there is everything in the house requisite for the occasion, and the chief servant will say that it will be all right if everything is left for him to arrange. A lady once told me that she was horrified to discover later on that her servant in his zeal, and in order to make a fine show, had gone forth and stolen chickens, and other articles, all round the neighbourhood! I have heard also of a case in which a servant, in order to make a good display on the dinner table when guests were coming, borrowed some china and silver from a friendly servant at another house, and the result was that his master's table made a brave appearance when the guests came. During the dinner one of the guests complimented his host on the very beautiful dinner service, and asked casually "Have you had it long?" The host replied that he was really rather puzzled by it, as he could not remember having seen the things before, on which the guest remarked with a laugh, "Well, they happen

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to be mine!" Inquiries followed, and it turned out that the faithful, zealous servant had borrowed the plates and spoons from the house of the gentleman who was being entertained—well-meant efforts to please which turned out to be rather embarrassing.

I once knew an old retired servant who had in her time been for many years with a noble family connected with the army. That old woman was a tremendous believer in the aristocracy, and her knowledge of the relationships between the various great houses of the land was prodigious, as was her acquaintanceship with the history of most of the generals in the army and the comparative status of different regiments. She had a positive passion for being present at anything of the nature of a royal procession, and never failed to watch the grandees and others going to a court or a levee. With easy familiarity she would explain to the bystanders who this or that great man was, saying "There goes Devonshire," or "'Ere comes Norfick," in a manner that deeply impressed the crowd. Many and many a time she related the thrilling circumstance of how she once managed to touch for a moment the cocked hat of the Duke of Cambridge—I need hardly add that it was not on that remarkable man's illustrious head at the time. That touch was as much to her as being presented at court is to many people—she felt better after it, as though virtue had gone out of the ducal

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headgear and had entered into her.

Having been in some way associated with the army, the sturdy old woman rather looked down on the navy. It was in vain that she was told that the navy was the senior service, for she merely replied placidly that she did not "hold with" sailors. And she had a most extraordinary way of alluding with pity to some of the most august personages, her favourite phrase being "pore young feller," a phrase which was so inappropriate as to be really grotesque in some cases. For instance, I remember that when our present King became Duke of York, and was in the direct line of succession to the throne, she made the extraordinary comment, "And him brought up a sailor, too—pore young feller!" She had her preferences in regard to the army also, and considered what she always called "the tillery" as the finest branch of the service. Without denying merit to Lord Kitchener, she was in the habit of dismissing him with the contemplative remark, "And he's so tall, too—pore young feller!" The old woman was quite a character, full of all sorts of curious information picked up in a wandering life—though she could hardly read, and wrote, as unworthy people say the Scots joke, "wi' deeficulty."

There is one type of servant who has always had a fascination for novelists, and also for Mr Punch—I mean the English flunkey. There is something superb about the leading members or specimens of

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this class. I shall never forget a picture in *Punch* showing one of the city flunkeys in Brussels on the occasion of a state visit by the Lord Mayor to that city many years ago. The gorgeous creature was shown lolling against a door and addressing the Belgian butlers and footmen, who stood listening deferentially, and his message to them was to this effect—"Yes, your buildings is fine, your streets is by no means bad—but your champagne is gewsberry." It was the last word on a great topic—the pronouncement of an expert. Of a higher grade than the ordinary flunkey is the butler—a pre-eminently English type. There may be, and I daresay there are, foreign butlers—but they are not as our butlers, neither are their ways our ways. It is on record that a certain leading statesman in this country obtained and retained the confidence of the public simply because he looked so very much like a butler. In this way he gained the reputation of being a safe man—slow, perhaps, but steady.

The true butler never shows surprise in any circumstances. He is impassive, solidly serene, and disturbed by nothing. I know a case in which a fine specimen of this class was severely tested, and he came out of the ordeal quite successfully. A man of title who is still young, and who, however long he may live, will never cease to be a boy, was staying at his country house, and being laudably anxious to amuse his small

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children, he let them see him go upstairs "froggy." That means he crouched on the stairs with hands on one step, and feet on another two or three steps lower down. Then by a series of jumps he put his feet where his hands had been, and so went leaping up amid the delighted shouts of the young hopefuls. When he reached the first landing he saw standing there, massive, and showing no sign of surprise, the old family butler, who remarked coldly, but without any actual sign of disapproval, "What wee-ine will you have for dinner, sir?" My titled friend told me afterwards that he felt rather sold when he found that the highly respectable Spiffkins had seen him hopping upstairs like a frog, but he was not going to show any dismay. So, having given a hurried answer about the "wee-ine," he hopped up the next flight, out of sheer bravado, and to let Spiffkins see that this was a free country, and, looking back, he saw that worthy man contemplating him with fixed solemnity of expression. When the tale was told to me, I remarked that if the butlers of England were to compare notes as to the different manners in which they had seen men of title go upstairs, there might be some curious revelations. My distinguished friend assented, and then I hinted that it might be useful to establish a reputation for going upstairs on all fours, and then when he found it impossible to go up in any other way, he would not be suspected of anything other than ec-

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centricity. This was dismissed as an unworthy suggestion. But what a vast number of secrets are locked in the massive bosoms of butlers—and of other servants too—and how few of these men and women prove unworthy of their trust !

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
NAVY AND ARMY

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH OF THE NAVY AND THE ARMY

A FEW YEARS AGO I WAS PRESENT AT A public dinner, when a tough old admiral replied for the navy after the fighting services had been toasted. He said that he had been reading certain letters in the *Times* in which all sorts of views were expressed as to who really won the battle of Waterloo—Wellington or Blucher, the British or the Prussians. He said it was an interesting question and one which he would not try to answer—and then he added with considerable complacency, “ But I have never heard any dispute as to who won the battle of Trafalgar ! ” This was regarded a “ nasty one ” for the sister and junior service—and I believe it is an article of faith in the senior service that when the British army gets into a mess the British navy comes to the rescue. I am not going to express any opinion on so delicate a point, but anyone who has visited the fleet and explored a battleship must have noticed how keen everyone is, how interested they all are in their duties, how they love not only their great profession, but also the ship to which they are attached, and how delighted they are to find others take an interest in it. Only once have I heard an expression of indifference by an officer in regard to any detail concerning his ship, and I am bound to say that the point was one of no importance at all. It was years ago, and I was on board what is now known as the old *Canopus*. I was with

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the captain on a lower deck, and I was gazing at the tremendous mass of pipes and wires overhead, running along what a landlubber (and I am one) might call the "ceiling." The captain seemed to read my thoughts, for he said, "Don't ask me how many miles of wires and pipes there are on this ship—everybody asks that—I don't know, and I'm damned if I care."

Long after that—indeed quite recently—I witnessed an incident which much impressed me as to the zeal and readiness for active service of the first line of defence. A number of members of Parliament were being shown over certain battleships at Spithead, when a grey-haired senator was approached by a rather diminutive midshipman—one who resembled the midshipmite in the song which used to be so popular. The following conversation then took place :

Middy: I believe you are a member of Parliament?

Veteran M.P.: Yes, that is so.

Middy: Well, now, why can't we have a war with Germany at once? We could blow them out of the water if we tackled them now—but in three years' time I am not quite sure about it.

M.P.: Ah, I am only a private member and I cannot arrange wars—but the Prime Minister is coming aboard directly, from the *Enchantress*: you should mention the matter to him.

Middy: He'll be talking all the time to ad-

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mirals and sea-lords. I shall not be able to get near him, and even if I did, I don't suppose he'd take a damned bit of notice of what I said.

And with this the small hero walked off, evidently dissatisfied with the outlook. There was a cheery suggestion in his bearing of being "ready, aye ready"—as there is about all ranks in the navy.

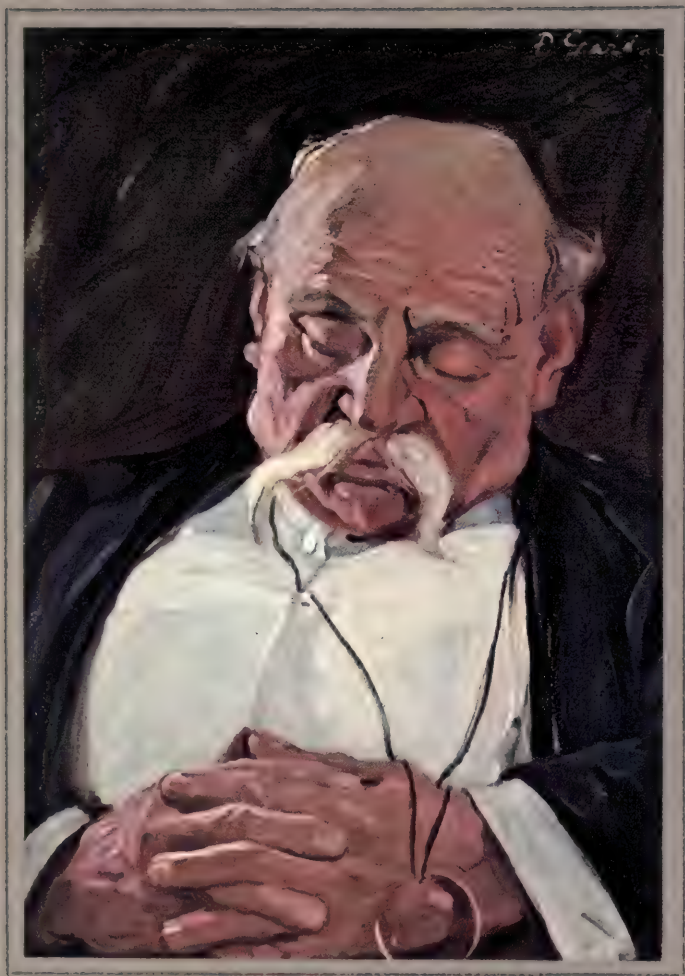
I once had the curious and most interesting experience of drinking tea on board the *Dreadnought* and of having my tea handed to me by Sir John Fisher himself, as he was then known. There seemed to be something inappropriate and out of place in lifting a delicate china tea-cup—with little finger genteelly extended after the manner of the etiquette observed in the best suburban drawing-rooms—on board this grim, grey, floating monster (the phrase is inevitable when writing about the *Dreadnought*). I half expected to hear some hoarse voice roaring out, "Belay there and bring in buckets of rum." And in addition to exploring this historic vessel, pretending to understand much that seemed to me to pass all understanding, I was taken through avenues of ships—if such a phrase may be used—extending for many miles. They belonged to different classes: battleships, cruisers, scouts, destroyers, and so forth: but they all looked much the same to me. It is true that I could detect some elementary difference, as for instance the fact that some had more funnels than others, but that was all. On

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such occasions, however, we all like to assume a familiarity with naval affairs, and I was much helped by the fact that the names of the various vessels were displayed—such as the *Cyclops* or the *Invincible*, the *Drake* or the *Bellerophon*—and so I nodded knowingly every now and then, saying, “Ah, there’s the good old *Drake*—fine boat the *Drake*.” Later on I was assured that by applying the word “boat” to one of these war vessels I had revealed myself as a land-lubber of the most hopeless type. It was as bad a slip as speaking of a fox’s “tail” to hunting men, or alluding to the hounds as “dogs.” But however ignorant a man may be of the technical phraseology of the fleet, he cannot help being inspired by the spirit of Nelson and Collingwood when he sees one of these great displays and hears a royal salute thundered down the lines when the monarch arrives on the royal yacht. The most peace-loving landsman begins to straddle about, to rake the offing, and to talk rather patronisingly of the way in which Togo smashed the Russian fleet. “Not a bad chap, Togo,” I heard one little gentleman from the southern suburbs say—and I doubt if he knew the difference between an anchor and a twelve-inch gun, while I am certain he had no notion as to what was meant by port and starboard.

Great is the influence of environment, and just as men begin to hum “A life on the ocean wave” when they are (or think they are) inspecting the fleet, so



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every man is secretly a Bill Adams at heart when present at a field day at Aldershot. Dr Johnson had a poor opinion of sailors, saying that a ship was a prison with the chance of being drowned. On the other hand, that remarkable man has put this statement on record :

Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier. . . . Were Socrates and Charles XII. of Sweden both present in any company, and Socrates to say, "Follow me and hear a lecture in philosophy," and Charles, laying his hand on his shoulder, to say, "Follow me and dethrone the Czar," a man would be ashamed to follow Socrates.

I should like to have seen Sam at an Aldershot field day when everything is on a war footing—he would have been far more excited than he was at the sale of Thrale's brewery. As I have watched the operations on such occasions I have never had a real grasp of the situation, nor have I really known what was taking place—but I believe that this can be said of most of the men who take part in the business of real war. But I know that when the batteries begin to speak, when men are seen galloping desperately about in a manner reminding one of the immortal song, "Bobbety-bob, bobbety-bob, here comes the galloping major!" if anyone were to suggest a lecture by Socrates, he would hear something that would startle even a

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golfer. At such a time Socrates is distinctly "off." One need not understand the true inwardness of the proceedings in order to be inspired by them. Some man who knows, or who pretends to know, has told me that strategy means getting your men to the scene of action, while tactics means the handling and manœuvring of the men in action. Few civilians know anything about tactics, but none will admit this nescience. Breathes there the man with soul so dead that he is not prepared to explain, and to criticise severely, the operations on the field of Waterloo? We have all seen and heard red-faced civilian gentlemen in club smoking-rooms, dabbing down one match-box here and another there on the table and saying, "Now, this is your Wellington, and that is your Napoleon—cannot you see at a glance with what criminal negligence Wellington exposed his flank? He was beaten twice, sir, early in the day, and had it not been for the fact that Napoleon had an attack of colic at the critical moment, Wellington would have been smashed, sir, smashed. He ought to have been impeached—he escaped because his rival happened to have the stomach-ache!" I have already mentioned the eternal controversy that goes on as to who won the battle of Waterloo, and I have always agreed with Thackeray's answer when the question was put to him—he said, "Well, at any rate the French did not," and that, after all, is the main point.

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It matters not how often and how sincerely a man has denounced Jingoism and militarism, all these sound and sensible views are abandoned when he hears the brave music of a distant drum and sees a realistic sham fight in full swing before him. You see the cavalry coming on like thunder, or thousands of Tommies making wild rushes forward, then lying flat for a minute or two, up again with another rush, while big guns boom, machine guns rattle and rifles snap unceasingly—and the quietest man becomes dangerous. You will hear at such a time a Quaker vowing that if the War Lord of Potsdam were to turn up it would go badly with him. "Sir," some stranger who has never been even in the volunteers will say, "sir, if the Kaiser came here he would be ambushed in five minutes," and you reply with earnestness that he would be jolly well ambushed before he could say "Hoch." It is always pleasing to me to observe one of these amateurs pretending to follow through field-glasses the movements of the troops, for I know well enough that the attempt is nearly always a failure. The glasses make the whole landscape rise and fall in the most bewildering manner. But the amateur sticks to it as though the success of the whole proceedings depends on his keeping an eagle-glance on every movement. I once met a gentleman at one of these displays who was a quiet professor of elocution—I mean quiet in disposition, for he necessarily made

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a good deal of noise when engaged in his professional duties. There he was at Aldershot, carrying his neatly folded umbrella after the manner in which he had seen officers clutching their swords. He was positively dangerous, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against everyone. He glared around as if looking for some victim, so I pretended to see someone beckoning from a distance—and I retreated, cleverly taking advantage of cover, which is, I believe, the technical way of saying that I sneaked off and hid myself.

The only men who keep calm on such occasions are the military men. I remember saying to a young officer, when the surroundings had become so exciting that even I was roused, "I'll tell you what it is, my boy, what we want is war at any price." I was as keen about it as the young midddy I have mentioned. And all the military gentleman said with a grin was "Rats! you'd better have a lemon squash—the sun is jolly hot on this hill!" Nor are the privates at all inclined to get foolishly elated at such times. I talked with a full private—I use the phrase in its technical, and not in an invidious sense—after one of these thrilling displays. So far from being excited, he was moody, and resented the fact that he had been made to run about, to crawl on his stomach, and to carry a heavy load for hours on a hot day, in order to amuse a crowd of people from London whom he

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called many things, the least impolite of which was "blighters." When I told him that someone had described the soldier's lot as the "lordly life," he said that whoever had made that remark was a liar, and he prefixed to the word "liar" quite a remarkable string of adjectives of an intensive nature. It was in vain that I tried to get him to talk about the incidents of the day—he insisted on enlarging on what he conceived to be the difference between the promises made to him by the War Office before he enlisted, and the performances of that department after he had joined the colours. And he added some terribly damaging statements about a number of highly placed officials and their ancestors, particularly in the female line, back to quite a remote period.

It has been found, however, that those who, whether in the navy or the army, grumble and growl and curse the most freely, never let this pleasure interfere with business. Wellington said that his dandy officers fought as well as, if not better than, any others, and in the same way honest Tommy, who in a hoarse and husky tone recites his grievances, fights like a Bengal tiger when the time for fighting comes. I believe Nelson carried on an eternal controversy with the admiralty of his day, and always regarded himself as ill-used by the department—but some of his naval engagements were rather successful. As I have already pointed out, there has never been any contro-

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versy about who won the battle of Trafalgar. We all grumble, we all think ourselves ill-used—I daresay Mr Rockefeller sometimes groans in spirit because owing to some neglect or error in judgment he is worth only four hundred million pounds instead of being worth four hundred and one millions. As Thackeray asks—"Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?" I talked in this strain to my friend Tommy, who resented having been hustled to make a Cockney holiday, and having accompanied my homily by something not quite so dry—something in a pint pot—I induced him to toast the army (but not the War Office), and he did not refuse to drain another pot to the navy, concerning which his language, though meant to be friendly, was lurid enough to satisfy even a stoker in the Red Sea.

CHAPTER NINETEEN
ENGLISH CLUBMEN

CHAPTER NINETEENTH ABOUT THE ENGLISH CLUBMEN

WE ARE APT TO LOOK ON THE CLUB AS essentially an English institution, though there were clubs of a sort existing in other lands long before our interesting ancestors had ceased to squat in caves. It is on record that the Spartans had their clubs, and members were elected by ballot. Again, Aristotle alludes to the custom of men clubbing together for merrymaking, and it is said that Cicero was a notable clubman. I imagine he was a fine specimen of the clubbore, being far too eloquent a man to make a good talker. It is said that Queen Victoria complained that Mr Gladstone always addressed her as if she was a public meeting, and I can fancy Cicero haranguing his fellow clubmen as if he was holding forth to an overflow meeting. In those early days the ladies had their sociable *collegia*, which were in a certain degree the forerunners of the ladies' clubs of to-day. But all these resemblances between the ancient and modern club are superficial. Of the modern club two things may be said generally—first, it is necessary to form a committee to be cursed and reviled by all the other members; and, secondly, it is desirable to have a library in which members may sleep and snore. The way in which to awake a noisy sleeper in a club library is by dropping heavy volumes near him, and the *Encyclopædia Britannica* has been bought by many clubs for this purpose. No sleeper has been known to resist the

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appeal of the whole series of volumes discharged like an avalanche close to him—at least no living sleeper. A few years ago the librarian of a big club became a little anxious because a gentleman had been for several days in exactly the same attitude in an easy-chair. No attempt had been made to arouse him, as he had made no noise, but the librarian thought the time had come when he might be asked if he had done with a book tightly clutched in his fingers. Investigations proved that the gentleman was dead—indeed, the club doctor said he had been dead for a week, and the incident only proves that a man is not interfered with in a well-regulated club if he is quiet and inoffensive.

In some play recently some man in announcing his supposed occupation declared that he was tea-taster to the Sports Club, a remark that always excited the derision of the gallery. Such a post was evidently regarded as an obvious sinecure, the suggestion being that there is no feverish demand for tea at the club in question, other forms of liquid refreshment being preferred. I have never had the advantage of visiting that club, and so I have no knowledge of its members' tastes. Another suggested sinecure—"chucker out at the Athenæum"—has naturally amused by its presumed incongruity many who have never entered that highly respectable resort. There are some people—cabmen and others—who

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are firmly convinced that the Athenæum is crammed with bishops every night, playing cards, having the time of their lives, and using dreadful language. This is no doubt to some extent incorrect—at any rate there is a touch of exaggeration in the legend—but so long as concealment and secrecy exist so long will there be false reports. I suppose every man who is not a Freemason (and I am not) has a furtive belief in the tale that the neophyte or novice is delicately touched up with a red-hot poker when being initiated, and so the tale about brawling bishops in the Athenæum is received with gladness by those who wish to believe the fable.

A few years ago temperance reformers suggested that if all public-houses had plate-glass fronts giving a complete view of what was going on inside, the result would be a lessening in the consumption of drink. The notion was that the young suburban dude, or the thirsty navvy, would be scared by that fierce light which beats through polished glass and blackens every blot. It strikes me that the British navvy at any rate would remain "like Teneriffe or Atlas unremov'd" under such a test. Nay, he would gaze back upon his critics, surveying them with unconcern through the glass bottom of his pint pot. But if our clubs, especially select, old-fashioned clubs like the Athenæum, were to be thrown open in this way to the inspection of the man in the street, what a commo-

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tion would be caused! Of course I do not suggest that there are practices in that club of which the members have any reason to feel ashamed—but men like to feel secure from prying eyes, and safe from domestic pursuit when in one of these modern cities of refuge. Old-fashioned gentlemen rather resent the introduction of the telephone into their clubs, for by this means they hear, they are made to hear, the sound of a voice that would otherwise be still. The telephone in a club has the same effect on it that the Channel tunnel would have on Great Britain—the place ceases to be completely isolated.

I once saw a Bishop of London (Dr Creighton, the least “bishippy” of bishops) and his accomplished wife dining with the New Vagabonds and claiming to be a vagabond himself. I wondered what some of his old-fashioned predecessors would have thought had they been asked to be upstanding and to say or sing that a certain number of self-confessed and obvious vagabonds were jolly good fellows! And all sorts of great and famous men have been admitted to the haunts of the Savages whose lair is in Adelphi Terrace. When the Savage Club was founded Edmund Yates asked, or is said to have asked, “What is the subscription?” and the cheery reply was, “Just whatever the members choose to owe.” These curious financiers on one famous night entertained the great Gladstone, that mighty financial purist, and the states-

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man, who knew well how to unbend, seems to have made a night of it. According to Mr Aaron Watson, the club historiographer, Gladstone's was the liveliest of all the speeches delivered that night, and he kept the table in a roar. But perhaps the most amusing part of the proceedings came later, when Mr George Grossmith was announced as about to deliver a very instructive lecture on the "Dark Races." The chairman said that the lecture was the result of much painstaking research, and Mr Gladstone, anxious no doubt to show that he was quite as ready for serious intellectual entertainment as for fun, immediately became not only grave but grim. He seized on some paper, he produced a pencil, and he sat at attention, prepared to take notes, and no doubt to dispute every statement. He was in his best House of Commons, front bench, attitude, and Mr Grossmith began. Within three minutes it was made clear that the lecture was a screaming burlesque—and the hugest delight was caused by the change in Mr Gladstone's attitude when the light dawned on him. Away went pencil and paper, he leaned back leading the laughter and booming in his great sonorous "Hear, hear," like a minute-gun at sea.

The tale about the committee of the Eccentric Club putting up a notice to the effect that "Gentlemen are requested to order hot suppers after 6 A.M." is, I believe, true. I was once, and once only, present in that

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hospitable resort, and I remember that an "excellent repast," as the country reporter says, was "negotiated" (to use another favourite phrase) at three in the morning, after which music arose among those voluptuous swells, as Byron says, or something like it. A distinguished actor played the piano, operating the treble notes with his right hand and chopping out the bass by smiting the notes with the brim of his silk-hat. There is, of course, a vast gulf separating the Athenæum from the Eccentric, and many of the intervening clubs are famous or notorious chiefly for the savage manner in which candidates for membership are black-balled. At one club where two black balls are enough to exclude an aspirant, there was one old gentleman who invariably put in one, for he said that each member of the club ought to have the chance of keeping out anyone to whom he objected, and thus the old gentleman had so arranged matters that any other one member could decide the election. Sometimes, however, in clubs where the black balls have to form a certain proportion of the total number of votes given, these grim kill-joys overreach themselves. There is a well-known incident in connection with an old club in Pall Mall, where a surly member induced two or three kindred spirits to attend in order to blackball a candidate. One of the little gang had journeyed a long way from the country in order to assist in this unhallowed rite. When the result was declared it was

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found that the number of black balls was not enough to exclude, and, indeed, it turned out that they had actually secured the man's election. For one of the rules was that a man could not be elected unless the total number of votes, friendly and hostile, reached a certain amount, and in this case that total had been just attained. When it dawned on the man who had travelled from the north of England to ensure the rejection of the candidate that his exertions had not only failed to keep him out, but had actually helped to put him in, the anguish of the surly one was keen.

In regard to club types enough has been written. Thackeray, who was a great clubman, has dealt faithfully with many in his chapters on club snobs. We all know Jawkins, the terror of the smoke-room, whose arrival has a dispersive effect, who clears the place like a pestilence. The type is immortal. There are men to-day who stand in front of the fire and recite as original conversation the leading article from the day's *Times*, and who repeat imaginary conversations they have had with Mr Asquith or Lord Lansdowne; and these men were not born when Thackeray wrote about Jawkins afflicting the men of that day by saying, "I said to Peel that if you touch sugar you touch tea," and so on. Such men will last as long as clubs last. Then there is the man who is always grumbling at the food, declaring that the dining-room is a piggery, and that the cooking is a scandal. As a rule such men have

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to put up with very simple fare at home, nor do they disdain to consume huge portions of the food which they affect to despise in their club. It is said that at one club the catering or kitchen committee decided that while a cut from the joint cost a certain amount, any subsequent cut (known technically as a "follow") should be free. One of the most persistent grumblers, when he heard of what was called the "freedom of the follow," approached the committee and asked if he could begin with a follow! When the impossibility of such a scheme was pointed out, the grumbler declared with many expletives that he really did not know what the club was coming to and threatened to resign. I was once on the committee of a club, and I know how earnestly the threatened resignation of some members is yearned for on many occasions. It is very difficult to find an opportunity of turning a member out of a club without laying the club open to the danger of an action in the law courts, and these growlers know that fact and trade on it. I remember the case of a man who sent in his resignation many times, but always calculated so that these messages were received some days before the next meeting of the committee, and then before the committee could accept the resignation the fellow would withdraw it. He played the game once too often, for when his well-known letter of resignation reached the secretary that official had an emergency meeting of the committee call-

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ed—they met, they accepted the resignation, they even danced with joy in the privacy of the committee room. And then a grave official acceptance (without any pretence at regret) was sent to the gentleman who was so plentifully endowed with the Christian virtue of resignation. It reached him as he was penning his usual withdrawal, and his conduct and language showed no trace of resignation in one sense. He left the place in a blaze of profanity worthy of Mephistopheles going down through the trap door as the flames jump up to receive him, and to this day he vows that he was tricked and betrayed. Of course there are other men, men of quite a different type, who dislike clubs, men who are temperamentally “unclubbable.” The gentle Cowper has referred rather unkindly to

“ . . . the club, the scene of savage joys,
The school of coarse good fellowship and noise.”

I think it is Mr Birrell who has said that Cowper could never stand any noise louder than the hissing of the tea-urn. One can forgive Cowper almost anything, because he wrote some of the most delightful letters ever penned—but he was wrong about clubs, which do so much to increase the public stock of harmless pleasure.

CHAPTER TWENTY

ENGLISH RAILWAY ENGINES
AND MANNERS

CHAPTER TWENTIETH ENGLISH RAILWAY ENGINES AND MANNERS

MOST ENGLISH BOYS HAVE AT SOME time or other yearned, secretly or otherwise, to drive a railway engine, and many have found a delight in pretending to be railway engines, imitating the action of the connecting rod with their arms, and the snorts of the funnel from their mouths. The interest in locomotives remains with most lads even when they grow up to be men. They will talk about the "marvellous developments of modern mechanical science" as they look at a modern locomotive monster, though very likely they have no notion as to what makes the wheels go round. And some who really do understand these machines declare that engines are not devoid of consciousness, that they feel and know things. I have talked to men who drive engines on main lines, or are responsible for the plunging giants that force great liners through the Atlantic, and they say that these things are not only conscious, but are sometimes skittish and liable to moods. You may feed them with coal and water, you may even pet them, but at times they will sulk—they have taken offence at something or other. Years ago I used to feel quite a real and personal sympathy with one set of railway engines—those that at that time hauled the trains round and round the Inner Circle on the Underground. I believe that every engine likes to have a good spin sometimes, to show what it can do in a run of an hour or two; but

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those unfortunates never had a chance—they stopped every two or three minutes. Directly they began to develop anything like speed, the hateful brakes were applied—they were like some high-spirited child who is forever hearing the eternal “don’t” from some crabby guardian. I have not the least doubt that some of those engines panted often for a headlong sprint three or four times round the circle. Only once did I see any signs of satisfaction exhibited by one of them, and that was just as they were being replaced by electricity. As I was leaving Westminster Bridge station one night after the House was up, I found that one of the experimental electric trains had broken down, and it was being hauled away by one of the doomed old veterans. There was pride in its puffs, defiance in its eye or headlight, and it was enjoying every sensation that is suggested by the old saying that revenge is sweet.

It is customary to refer to engines as “she” or “her,” and this is reasonable, for engines are vain and coy and self-conscious. Directly they become old-fashioned they are uneasy, and like to travel by night. I am told that pre-dreadnought warships hate to be shown at naval reviews in close contrast with ships of the latest design—and that may be so—it is certain that low-boilered, long-funnelled locomotives are uneasy when near one of the newest types. Many a time I have watched the “making up” of one of the lordly ex-

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presses which leave Paddington for the west—and this is what happens. First of all the train is brought into position at the platform by a poor old-fashioned little engine hooked on to the tail end of the train. That engine has a low boiler and a ridiculously long funnel, resembling the neck of a pre-historic beast. There may have been days in the distant past when men looked at it, and talked about the developments of mechanical science, but it is a discarded favourite, a back number, a “have been.” It comes along with a modest little “piff-piff, piff-piff,” until the train is in position, and then it stops meek and unobtrusive. The driver and the stoker as a rule have a depressed look—they and the antiquated contrivance they drive are ignored by the bustling public. And then a few minutes before the train starts the huge and swaggering monster that is to haul the express to Cornwall or Wales backs in with insolent deliberation. Its boiler bulges up huge as a mountain, being checked in its policy of expansion only by the bridges under which it has to shoot. Only the top of the concealed funnel appears like a sneering lip of copper or of brass. A group of reverential observers gathers round, and as they gaze at its massive mechanism the engine undoubtedly enjoys the sensation it creates. It comes on the scene just as the star performer in an opera company appears confidently anticipating a welcome, or as a Cabinet Minister nonchalantly strolls to his

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place in the House on a day when private members have had to scramble for seats hours earlier in the day.

That engine openly preens itself during the turmoil of the last minutes before the final whistle is blown and the green flag fluttered. It throbs with anticipation, and then with an air of disdain the monster begins to cough up one or two deep resounding notes from that little sneering lip that tops the funnel. The wheels may slip a little at the start, but that is only pretence, even as a juggler or an acrobat will pretend to fail once or twice in order to give the more effect to his final triumph. The giant soon gets a grip of its load, and away it goes to the west, as if saying, "I could do this on my head." And when it goes, away go the spectators also. No one notices the poor little played-out rattle-trap in the rear, which soon passes away with its melancholy "piff-piff, piff-piff," to sneak into some siding until wanted again. I have often thought that the poor old wretch must sometimes be tempted to rush after the slowly starting express and bang into the tail buffers with the defiant exclamation—"Take that, you beast."

Almost any man that you chance to meet perched on the top of the last 'bus thinks himself capable of doing two things well—managing a railway and running a daily paper. I do not pretend to be able to do either, but I think I can point out faults in the management of some of our lines. Dr Johnson said that

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though he could not make a table, he had a right to tell a carpenter that he had made a very bad table. And so I may perhaps point out to those who direct our railways certain shortcomings. When railway bills are before the House of Commons no one can be more affable than your railway directors. They try to make one believe that their one purpose is to make life easy and pleasant for the traveller. But who is more helpless than an individual traveller in a crowd at a terminus, or, worse still, at a big busy station that is not a terminus, when he is trying to find a place in a train? There is not the slightest difficulty in buying a ticket. Your money is taken with affable condescension, as if a favour was being conferred. Some of the very big companies give you the impression that you are entering the presence, as if being presented at court, when you hand over your money. After that you are ignored. I have been in the midst of a swaying crowd and have asked an overworked guard if a seat for which I had written has been reserved, and the answer has been, "You better see the inspector"! How in the name of Mahomet can one discover an inspector, or recognise him, at such a moment? Meantime with cynical irony men are bawling out, "Take your seats if you are going on." It is at such a moment that I have wished I could see one of those suave directors who prophesy smooth things in the House of Commons—I would say to them, "Come here, you

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common carriers, you have taken my money, where is the seat to which I am entitled?" There is a system prevalent on the Continent by which, for a shilling, you get a numbered seat which you can claim—the shilling may be of the nature of imposition, but most men would pay it rather than have to hustle and scramble and fight for that which they have bought.

The travelling Briton is also very often the cause of much of this unnecessary inconvenience. Everyone has met with the man who seems to think that because he has bought a ticket no one else has a right to enter the train. He will, directly he gets into a carriage, cover all the seats with his handbags, umbrella, rug, or what not, and sit there like a scowling Selkirk, claiming to be the monarch of all he surveys. There is a tale of some popular actor, whose name I forget, stepping into a carriage on a Scotch express at Euston, all the seats of which were covered in this way. He stood there and the train started, and at last the surly creature in one corner began with evident reluctance to move one bag, when the actor remarked cheerily, "Please don't put yourself to any inconvenience on my behalf—I can stand, I am only going as far as Glasgow." Such sarcasm would probably be wasted on a creature of that sort. I prefer the tale, which I hope is true, but I am afraid it is not, about the man whose bag was on a seat, and who said, when asked if the seat was engaged, that it was, and that the gentleman was coming

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back in a few minutes. The "intruder" was suspicious and said he would wait, and when the train started he flung the bag out, saying that it was a pity the poor gentleman, who had evidently been detained, should lose his bag! But for cold-blooded impudence the palm must be given to the woman traveller who calls herself a lady. I remember to this day, with unabated fury, an incident that happened years ago when I was leaving King's Cross for Harrogate. I had put a small handbag in a corner seat, and left the carriage for not more than two minutes to see other luggage placed in the van. When I came back all the four seats were taken by a party of women, and a creature looking like a she-grenadier was sitting in my corner, while the bag had been put in the rack. I said she had taken my seat, and all she remarked, in a tone of calculated insolence, was, "Speak to the guard." There was nothing else to be done for the moment, so I spoke to the guard, and he, like most guards, did all he could, but he could not shift the woman. So with the remark that it was no good talking to "that sort," he found me quite as good a seat elsewhere. But my fury was unabated (as it still is) and I sat nursing my wrath. About half an hour later I saw the she-grenadier and her companions tramp resolutely along the corridor to the luncheon car, and I saw my way to a justifiable and glorious revenge. Taking my handbag with me, I went back to the seat

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which I regarded as my own, and of course found the carriage empty. It was a smoking compartment, and the weather was sultry—but I closed the windows and also the ventilators. Then I smoked furiously, suffering much inconvenience, I admit, for the place soon became dense with smoke, so much that my eyes smarted—but I was content, for there I was in my own seat, awaiting the sequel serenely. At last the moment of my triumph came, for the grim female marched back, and when she pulled back the door from the corridor a great cloud of smoke smote her in the face and made her gasp and cough. I laughed—it was brutal, I know, but she had played the part of the brute first. Her companions stood behind with expressions distinctly suggesting the phrase “Hoity toity,” and I urbanely invited them to enter. When the lady grenadier demanded that corner seat, as she did between her coughs, I replied in her own words, “Speak to the guard,” and she immediately rang a bell. The guard appeared, and when she stated her case he replied politely that just as he had been unable to induce her to leave a seat previously taken by another passenger, so it was beyond his power to move me, but he would do what he had done for me—find her another seat. She seemed bewildered by the hatefulness of man, and tramped off, while the other three graces sat down violently in their seats. I was unconcerned, smoking and reading and feel-

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ing that all was right with the world. At some station short of Harrogate the three left the train, but not before the Amazon had come back to tell them that their station would be reached in a minute. She said nothing to me, but if ever I saw murder expressed in a look, it was on that occasion as she glared at me. I regret to say I grinned, and I noticed that the guard, as he shut the door after the little party had alighted, bestowed on me one of the most expressive winks I have ever seen. And yet, in spite of my having turned the tables on the person, I still think with rage of her cool, patronising insolence when I first detected her in a seat which was mine by the unwritten law observed by every reasonable railway traveller. Such an incident could not have happened if the reasonable continental custom of reserving a numbered seat prevailed in this country. We as a nation started railways, but in some respects—especially in the handling of luggage—we have fallen behind other nations. In some inventions, such as motor cars and flying machines, we let others begin, and then, profiting by their experiences, we get ahead of them; but here in England one is still at the mercy of any creature who chooses to sneak the seat in a railway carriage which you have secured, or which you think you have secured, after much tribulation.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE
OUR CRIMINAL CLASSES



"DRESS IN A LITTLE BRIEF AUTHORITY"

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST ABOUT OUR CRIMINAL CLASSES

IT MUST HAVE OCCURRED NOW AND then to most thoughtful people that if the criminal classes cannot be said to form an essential part of a great civilised community, their removal would certainly leave a great gap. Those dignified and estimable gentlemen, the judges—or at any rate some of them—would find their occupation gone, and also their salaries and pensions, if burglars and other offenders were to cease from troubling. I do not urge that the members of the criminal classes exert themselves in an altruistic spirit, or that they are inspired solely by a desire to support classes which claim to be more respectable. But it is certain that all sorts of people would suffer were there no crime—not only judges, but policemen, detectives, prison warders and governors and chaplains, the makers of handcuffs, the builders of Black Marias, manufacturers of safes and locks and bolts—and scores of others. Let no one say that I am advocating crime, for I am not, but I do say that when society draws up a balance-sheet in this affair something should be allowed to appear on the credit side. When the poet represented the legal luminary singing as he reviewed his honourable career,

“And many a burglar I’ve restored
To his friends and his relations,”

he showed how intimately bound up together are the interests of two great professions.

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Some years ago a well-meaning American sociologist proposed to call together a Pan-Criminal Congress in New York—a gathering at which thieves and rogues of all sorts and of all nations could meet together and discuss their relations with society, with the police, and with one another. The New York authorities, with a lamentable lack of imagination and of the sporting instinct, declined to guarantee immunity from arrest to the distinguished delegates, and so the proposal fell through, as a feeling of security is essential for the success of such a movement. It is generally the case that some of the most notable criminals of the day are “wanted,” and such gentlemen could hardly be expected to walk straight into the hands of the authorities. Thus the Pan-Criminal Congress had to be abandoned and a great opportunity was lost, for it has been well said that to know all is to forgive all, and it is most desirable to have the criminal’s case stated from his point of view.

Moreover, it was proposed by the excellent sociologist, as I have already pointed out, that the delegates should discuss their relations with each other, and thus we might have had an exchange of view between the two great rival schools of thought, the advocates of violence as represented by Mr Bill Sikes, and those who stand for the gentler and more insidious methods of swindling as practised by Mr Jeremiah Diddler, the eminent practitioner of Queer Street. It is under-

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stood that this gentleman urges that the difference between his manner of picking up a living and that of some successful financiers in the city is so fine as to elude the mental grasp. Obviously at a congress which can really claim to be pan-criminal, the promoters would have to accept the dictum of Voltaire in regard to the tastes of the true philosopher—there might be preferences, but there should be no exclusions. The murderer ought not disdain to meet the pickpocket, and talk things over in a spirit of true brotherhood. And of course on such an occasion there should be an honourable understanding to the effect that the delegates should not operate on each other. It would never do if, while Mr Sikes was delivering his presidential address, some other delegate were to sneak the watch which the president had gained by honest burglary, the watch which may be said to be his by right of conquest. Such conduct would be distinctly unprofessional, or “infamous,” as the medical men have it. Nor ought the representatives of pan-criminalism to be made uneasy about the security of their hats and umbrellas, the spoils of many a risky adventure.

In regard to crime I speak as an outsider, and not as an expert, or even as an ordinary practitioner. The reader may smile if he likes, but I claim that my undistinguished career has been crimeless hitherto, though of course I do not say that it will be so to the end. And

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as an outsider I have always supposed that the really great and thoughtful murderer can claim to be at the very top of the criminal profession. It is a sign of the times worth noticing that some of the most thoughtful murders in recent years have been devised and carried through to a successful issue by women. Of course I am acquainted with De Quincey's ingenious views on murder. That quaint philosopher argued that murder was reprehensible chiefly because it led to other practices which were worse. Many readers will remember that De Quincey had a young footman who was rather addicted to murder. It would be unfair to say that the young man made a practice of murdering people, as that was not the case, but he operated every now and then. His learned master sent for him and addressed him to this effect—I give the gist, and do not pretend to quote the exact words—"John, I hear that you occasionally commit murder, and I cannot continue to employ anyone who engages in such practices. Murder itself may not indicate real moral obliquity or turpitude, but it leads to other offences which are ruinous to the character. When a man gets accustomed to this sort of thing he is seldom content to stop there—he goes on to steal, then perhaps to forge, and after that, by a fatally easy descent, he begins to swear and to lie, until at last he finds himself guilty of procrastination, incivility, and even disobedience to parents. Many a man, John, can trace his ul-

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timateruin to some paltry murder of which he thought but little at the time." I have seldom read a more impressive homily on the danger of forming bad habits, and on the ease with which one descends when once the first step is taken on the downward track. All humanitarians will agree with another hint thrown out by the great opium-eater—a hint to the effect that it is not right to murder invalids, as their health is such that they cannot bear rough treatment. Now if that projected gathering had been held in New York we might have had this interesting and important subject discussed by those who can claim to be practical men—for there are scores of undetected murderers in the world. One's next-door neighbour may be one, or the fascinating man one meets at a genteel evening party. I believe the late Mr Wainwright, who did pretty well in the murder line, used to be the life and soul of many a musical evening, and was particularly charming during the period between his little lapse and his detection. We may apply to murderers the words of the poet, "Of their own merits modest men are dumb." There is no class more reticent as to their own professional achievements—they prefer to talk of anything rather than of these. Hence my regret that such a unique opportunity as that held out by our friend the sociologist was lost owing to the narrow officialism of the police authorities.

Again, it seems to me that many well-meant schemes

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for prison reform fail because those who draw them up are amateurs. They regard the problem from the outside, and that is the wrong point of view. Just as a toad under the harrow knows more about his experiences than even the cleverest man can tell him, so I imagine Bill Sikes is a more trustworthy authority on the faults and failings of the prison system than is the most distinguished Prison Commissioner. Had Mr Sikes been invited to New York, and allowed to speak freely, I have no doubt he would have told the world that what is wanted in our prisons is an enlightened application of the policy of the open door. I was once in conversation with an "old lag," a veteran member of the Order of the Broad Arrow, and I asked him what he thought of Richard Lovelace's quaint conceit to the effect that

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage."

My good friend with the dab toes, bandy legs, and hatchet face said that he had never heard of Lovelace before, but whoever he was he was a liar. Stone walls and iron bars were just what he had found the worst part of a prison. Now, I put it to the reader—who is more likely to be right on a point of this sort, an elegant flighty poet, or a man who had then done his fourteen years, and is, I believe, now expiating some other offence by what may be called a supplementary estimate of penal servitude? There was not a day during

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the fourteen years on which my friend (whose name and number I suppress from motives of delicacy) had not reason to notice that stone walls and iron bars do make a prison and a cage. Surely it is better to have the testimony of a man of experience—call him a “gaol-bird” if you like—than to rely on the sentimental outpourings of a verse-writer. But until Scotland Yard, and kindred institutions in other lands, will promise safe conduct to the experts, you will never get the best criminals to come together at a congress.

It is urged by some of this large and misunderstood class that they are doing in a practical way that about which eloquent politicians are content to perorate. Mr Roosevelt and others in America have said strong things about the danger involved in multimillionaires being allowed to hoard up huge sums of money. The danger is recognised by all thoughtful publicists in all civilised countries—but have these publicists any practical remedy to propose? They have not. It is left to Mr Sikes and the other members of the fraternity to do something definite and practical in the way of reducing those hoards, and putting money into circulation. This work is arduous and dangerous—and its utility is not only unrecognised, but those engaged in it are hunted and persecuted. I am by no means sure, however, that the multimillionaire is not a greater nuisance and danger than is Bill Sikes. When Mr Sikes walks off with some of the possessions of

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one of these over-rich monsters, I feel inclined to say that the end justifies the means; and when one of the millionaires passes away, I vow that his means justify his end—thanking Heaven and Sir William Harcourt for the Death Duties. The criminal with whom I discussed the prison theories of the poet Lovelace was a man of no erudition, but some wearers of the Broad Arrow are well-read men. I have heard of one gentleman who had done time, and he was anxious to call the attention of the Public Prosecutor, and all the counsel retained by that official, to the significant lines:

“And they, sweet soul, that most impute a crime
Are pronest to it, and impute themselves,
Wanting the mental range.”

These are the words of Tennyson, who was not only a poet, but also a poet laureate, and a peer of the realm. I wonder how many of our judges, or how many of the barristers who make fine incomes by prosecuting their fellow-men, could truthfully declare that they had never, at any time in their lives, robbed an orchard. The poet knew what he was talking about when he said that those who most impute a crime are pronest to it.

Again, it is urged by some of the most notable criminals that the police are the real promoters of crime. In some countries I fear it is true that the police do lure and tempt men into breaking the law, so that the

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detectives may in this way make easy arrests and earn promotion—but I do not believe that this hateful system obtains in England. Yet I am bound to admit the truth of an illustration given by one who regards the police as a mischievous force. He pointed out that on one occasion the population of a certain district in Ireland succeeded in surrounding and locking up the whole of the police force. What was the result? The next day not a single case was brought before the magistrates. White gloves were distributed and an excellent spirit prevailed. That in itself is striking evidence, but the evidence becomes irresistible when I add that directly the police were let loose several arrests were made. I have already said that if there were no criminals there would be comparatively few police—some might be needed for controlling traffic and so on, but not many. And now, as I have shown, the other side is stated by those who may be called “hon. gentlemen opposite,” and they urge that if there were no police there would be no criminals. Hasty people and shallow thinkers will say that there would be quite as many criminals, and perhaps more, but they would not be arrested, but this is to disregard a valuable doctrine. For no man can be rightly called a criminal until his guilt has been legally proved, or, in other words, all men can claim the right of being regarded as innocent until convicted before a properly constituted tribunal. Now it is evident that if there were no ar-

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rests there would be no trials and therefore no convictions and no criminals. Is there not therefore some force in the contention that if it were not for the police we should not have any criminals at all? It may be that there is some answer to that question, but I confess I cannot conceive one.

Again, I have seen it argued that the status of the criminal has been seriously lowered in modern times owing to the conduct of the authorities. Men have been driven into petty and sneaking practices by always being hunted about or tripped up. Suspicion breeds suspicion, and the day of the jovial, frank, jolly thief is over. It is said that the old barons who founded the German aristocracy (such as it is, and, of course, all Englishmen grin at all foreign noblemen) used to rob and plunder on the highroad, and were really what we should have called cut-purses and footpads. And some students maintain that the great families of this country, who are the real thing, founded their fortunes by taking that which they wanted, by force if necessary. To-day such proceedings are described as robbery with violence. It must be very exasperating for Mr Sikes to reflect when he labours away in the quarries at Dartmoor as a slave, that he suffers because he is keeping up a great tradition, and that had he lived in the twelfth or thirteenth century instead of in the twentieth he might have been the founder of a famous family bequeathing great estates and con-

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ferring hereditary legislators on his native land. This point and many others might have been pressed home and fully discussed at that congress if only a little more good feeling had been shown by the New York police. Indeed, while I have no sympathy with wild and general charges brought against the police, I am bound to say that the manner in which they suppressed this proposed assembling and meeting together of the gentlemen of the criminal profession—from the undetected perpetrator of wholesale murder to the confidence trick artist, or the area-sneaking thief—certainly suggests that the police feared that Mr Sikes and his friends might make out rather a strong case for their side of the question. Let me add for the encouragement of some, that crime is still practised in distinguished circles in some parts of the world. There is a tale told about a representative of the British Government being entertained at dinner by the Cabinet Ministers of one of the Balkan States. During the dinner the honest Briton was disgusted to notice that a Secretary of State sitting next to him had robbed him of his watch, but being anxious not to make a scene, he whispered the information to the Prime Minister. That distinguished man said, "Dear, dear me, that was too bad of him, I told him not to do anything of the sort—but force of habit is great. Leave it to me, however, and before the evening is over you shall have your watch." Half an hour later the Prime

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Minister beckoned the British representative into a corner and said, "Is this your watch?" The answer was, "It is—what did your friend say when you asked for it?" The Prime Minister's reply was, "Hush! don't say a word—he doesn't know I've got it from him." The tale is not new, I know—no tale is—but it is valuable as showing that pocket-picking has not been degraded and forced down to the lowest classes in some fortunate communities.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO
OUR INVENTORS

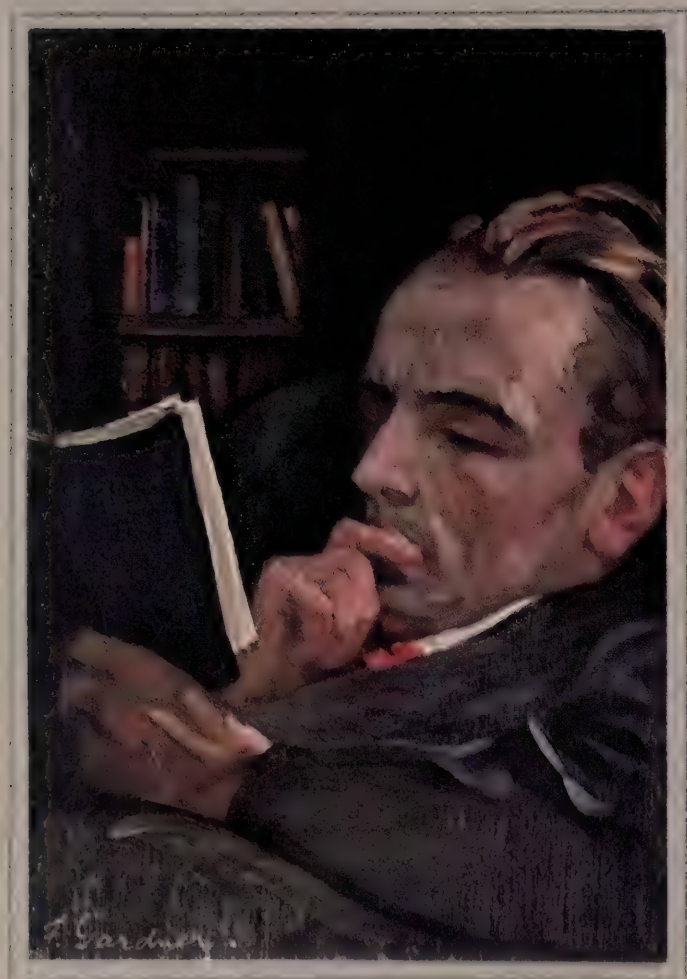
CHAPTER THE TWENTY SECOND CONCERNING OUR INVENTORS

IF I WERE TO SAY THAT WE AS A PEOPLE are too modest, some people might think that such a claim carries with it its own refutation. At the same time, I am convinced that in some respects we are inclined to depreciate our fellow-countrymen unduly and to exalt the foreigner unreasonably. I have heard it said that if an Englishman named Bill Scroggins, who happened to have a bullet-shaped head covered with closely cropped hair, chanced to be the finest violinist or operatic tenor in the world, he would never be recognised unless he neglected the barber for a couple of years and called himself Guglielmo Scroggiano, or Scroggini, Ivan Scroggeviski or Scroggovitch. This may be true or it may not, but I am certain that most people are of opinion that as a race the English are behind many other peoples in the matter of inventions. We are apt to suppose that nearly every ingenious device or appliance is almost necessarily American—the product of the marvellous brain of Mr Edison—or the outcome of the deep thought of a German, or the lively imagination of the French or Italians. I am not prepared to say that the English take the lead in regard to inventions, but only those who have had something to do with the Patent Office have any notion of the number of curious proposals that are submitted as inventions to bless mankind, and to enrich the discoverer. Every-

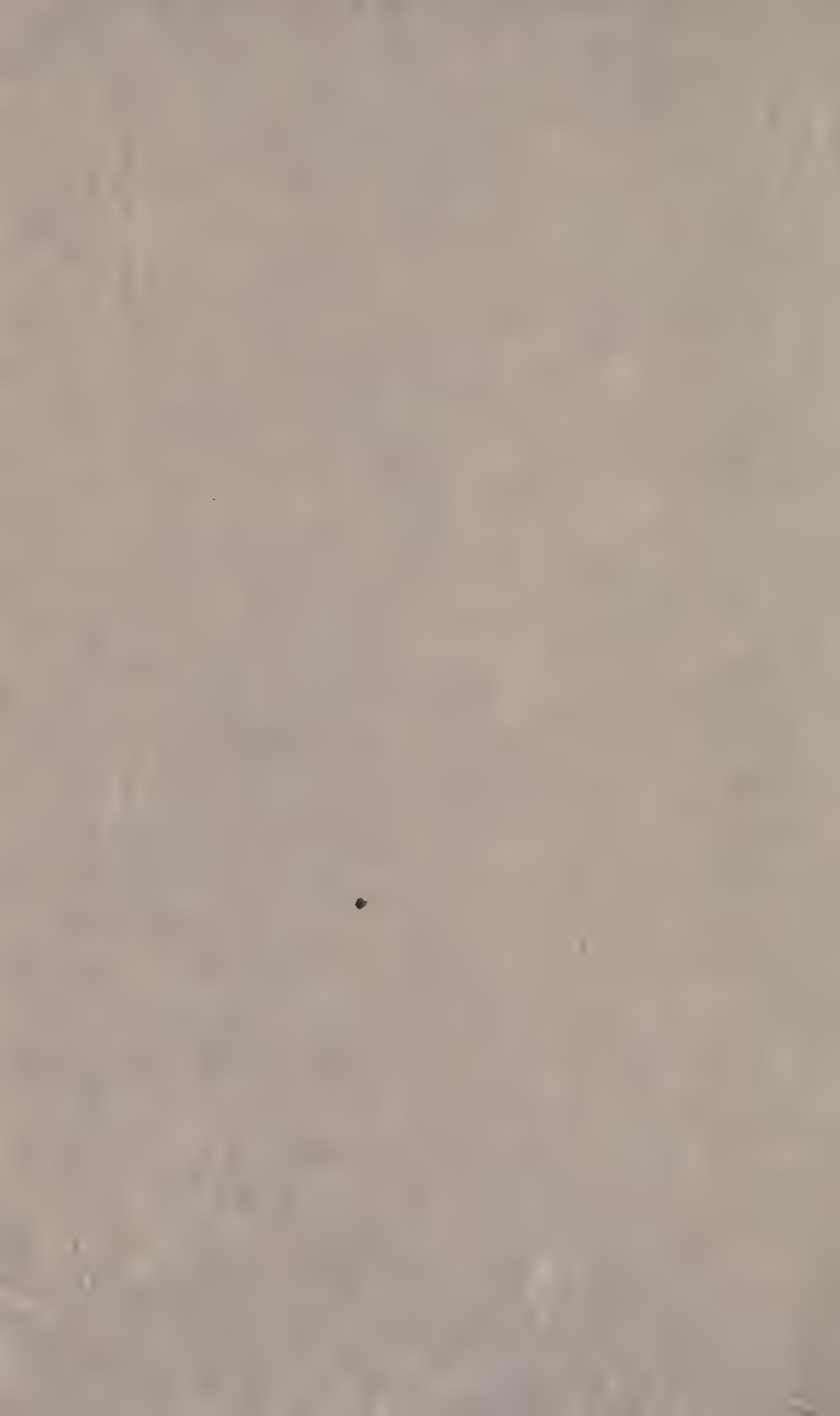
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one has heard of the man who by fastening a little bit of india-rubber on the end of a lead-pencil made a fortune and lived happily ever after. I have always envied that man, and at the same time I have felt rather savage at his success, for really it seems that anyone could have thought of his trick or scheme—but I believe that most of the devices that show signs of real genius are so simple that the average man, when he sees them, exclaims, "Hang it all, I could have done that if I had only thought of it!" The thing is to think of it first. We all know how Charles Lamb said of Coleridge that he could have written *Hamlet* "if he had had the mind."

Many of us, possibly thinking of ourselves, have agreed with Sir Henry Taylor's profound remark that the world knows nothing of its greatest men, and this truth must often be brought home to those who control the Patent Office. The way of the inventor has always been hard. There was a time when he was put to death as a knave or something worse, who was in league with the evil one, and now he is often dismissed with laughter as a fool. Who is to say that some of the proposed inventions that have never "taken on" are not as good as some which have brought fame and fortune to the inventor? Here is one which I have always thought as quite equal in ingenuity to the little bit of india-rubber and lead-pencil idea. A genius, whose name I would be pleased to mention if



MR. TOWNSEND IN READING



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I knew it, after much mental wrestling submitted to the Patent Office a proposal based on the following facts. That intelligent sporting dog, the pointer, can be trusted to detect the presence of a bird and to indicate its locality or whereabouts with unerring accuracy. He also knows by intuition exactly the moment when the bird will rise, and at that very moment the faithful friend of man wags his tail. Thus the inventor suggested that the end of the dog's tail should be placed in communication by a cord or string with the trigger of the sportsman's gun. The sportsman, guided by the intelligent creature's nose, would direct the gun with deadly accuracy—at the critical, or, as some would say, at the psychological moment, a wag of the tail would fire the gun, and the bird would be bagged. It seems almost incredible, but it is a melancholy fact that this was coldly ignored by an unimaginative world, and no patent has, I believe, been taken out. I make a present of the idea to my readers, though I fear no honourable man after this can claim that it is original.

Some may think that I am romancing when I say that this invention was seriously submitted, they may suggest that the story about the wag of a tail is really the tale of a wag, but my authority is Sir Cornelius Dalton, who was at one time at the head of the Patent Office. And he has revealed other bright notions which came under his official notice. Most of us have noticed

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that that hateful pest, the *Musca domestica*, or common (far too common) house-fly, has the power of walking with unembarrassed ease upside down on the ceiling. A gentleman who had noticed this saw more in it than is revealed to commonplace people. The ordinary man, if hit on the nose by a falling apple, would be irritated and would signify the same in the usual manner; but we all know that Sir Isaac Newton, after possibly making the customary exclamation, discovered and proclaimed a great physical law in consequence of the incident. And so with this later genius—he saw the flies walking on the ceiling, and he asked himself, “Why should not man do the same?” Hence an application for the protection of a patent in connection with this idea—let ceilings be highly magnetised, and let men wear boots shod with iron or steel, and there you are, or there you would be. It would enable you to take a new view of things—you would regard them from a higher standpoint, you would look down upon that to which hitherto you have looked up, and that in itself would imply a rise in the world. Of course small men might be tempted to become supercilious, but the truly great would escape this danger and would remain affable, though in one sense they would be “stuck up.” Again, by adopting this scheme there would be less wear and tear of carpets, while during the storm and stress of that great (and I believe quite unnecessary) domestic upheaval known as spring

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cleaning, poor man, instead of feeling in the way, could find a convenient refuge or sanctuary on the ceiling. The inventor received no encouragement, and I doubt not that he has often thought, as he has watched the flies strolling about above him, that

“Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these—it might have been.”

Every now and then incidents happen on our railways which cause people to write to the papers saying that the appliances to enable travellers to communicate with the engine-driver in moments of emergency are faulty. Some are content merely to grumble and protest, but there are bright souls who go further than this and make practical proposals. One of these practical men suggested that a good serviceable catapult should be fixed on the top of the carriages, so that passengers could, when necessary, snipe the driver. Every inventor is anxious to make a hit, and this inventor was employing that laudable desire for a useful purpose, for when the driver had been successfully “winged,” when he had it in the neck, he would understand that someone wished to attract his attention and he would turn round. Nor do the advantages of the scheme end there, for the driver might become infuriated and reply to the unexpected attention by flinging back lumps of coal, and in this way a tedious journey might be turned into quite a sporting affair. But here again the gentleman seems to have been ahead of his times,

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and, like many another inventor, he found his thoughtful device disregarded.

Another gifted man, recognising the fact that there is much unremunerative boring going on in this world, worked out a scheme for the biggest thing in the way of boring ever undertaken by man, and he undertook to make it a commercial success. The idea, which he explained to the Patent Office, was that a big hole should be bored to the centre of the earth, and thus an unlimited supply of really hot water could be tapped. He was sure that there is water there, and if we concede that point, as I think we should, seeing that the gentleman had devoted much attention to the question, I think we may feel sure that it is really hot. And there would be enough of it for shaving all mankind and for all the washing days of the world. Moreover, sufficient steam power could thus be obtained to drive everything. From the mechanical point of view the scheme seems perfect, but even I can detect one great difficulty. The fact is that the hot water in the centre of the earth is the common possession of mankind, and if a hole were bored from this country we should be poaching on a supply that belongs equally to all nations. The Monroe doctrine might be quoted, and Germany, which is anxious about a place in the sun, might be equally determined to have a share in the hot water. Thus the thoughtful man who put his views before the Patent Office had to contend against

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difficulties which, though real, had nothing to do with the engineering side of the problem. One objection which may be urged by the thoughtless can be dismissed as futile. It may be pointed out that as the earth revolves on its axis, the hot water would come out of the end of the tube, or be spilled, when the end of the tube passed under the centre of the earth. That looks plausible, perhaps, to those who are always trying to suggest difficulties—but I am sure that the original inventor did not overlook that possibility, and had probably provided some method of automatic corking up the hole before it sank beneath the level. In any case, this greatest bore in the earth has never been started. I am not sure that something of the sort was not in the mind of Mr Richard Threlfall when he lectured at the Royal Institution three or four years ago. He advocated the digging of a hole twelve miles deep, saying that the work could be finished in eighty-five years and need not cost more than five million pounds. The time is nothing—a mere twenty minutes—in comparison with the age of the world, and as to the cost, there are many men in America who could write a cheque for the amount and never miss it. But I have never understood why we should be asked to stop at a depth of twelve miles. What virtue is there in that number? It was a friend of Charles Lamb's who read to him the impressive line,

“Twelve, did'st thou say? Curse on those dozen villains!”

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And so I may confess that I suspect Mr Richard Threlfall's secret intention was to go more deeply into this matter. Probably he knew that it is not wise to startle men with too large a proposal, and he knew well enough that when once such a hole is begun men will keep on until they come out on the other side, such is the unconquerable curiosity of man. Even when a man is making a long speech, another boring process, and he remarks placidly, "But I think I have said enough," there is always some fool who will call out "Go on, go on," and so if men were to dig down for twelve miles, and were then to pop their heads out of the hole saying that the job was finished, there would be a universal shout of "Go on." At the time of writing, however, I believe the hole has not been begun, and as the first twelve miles are to take eighty-five years, it is probable that most of my readers will be bordering on old age before that part of the question arises.

I am sure that the complaint, already mentioned, that the English are lacking in inventive ingenuity will seem more unreasonable than ever when I mention another scheme placed before the Patent Office. It has to do with henroosts and beehives. Unhappily the word "henroosts" has acquired in recent years a political and even a partisan significance, and so I may reassure the reader by stating at once that I am not going to allude to Mr Lloyd George, either directly or

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indirectly. The fact is that a profound observer some-time ago noticed that a creature known as the bee-moth is in the habit of sneaking into beehives at night and stealing the honey when the bees are asleep. Of course there is no danger of such a crime being perpetrated when the busy bee is awake, as he would cause the bee-moth to perceive the point of his objection in a very stinging manner ; but the very fact that the bee is industrious causes it to sleep soundly. By means of something attempted, something done, it has earned its night's repose, and the bee-moth, which keeps bad hours, takes occasion by the hand. Well, the inventive gentleman noticed all this, and he also observed that the bees retire to rest just before the hens go to roost. So, like a true genius, he proposed that, by means of an ingenious arrangement, when the hens hopped up on their perches they at the same time automatically closed the doors of the beehives. Thus, all would be safe during the hours of darkness—the bee-moth would be foiled, and would have to discover some honest means of getting its living or perish miserably. Then, in the morning, when old Sol (beloved of descriptive writers) began to tip the little hills with gold, the hens would hop down from their perches, would begin to lay eggs in places difficult to detect (as is the custom of these trying fowl), and the bees would come forth to improve the shining hour in accordance with well-established precedent. There may be faults

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and failings in the invention, but I cannot perceive them—yet this man also received no encouragement from the Patenting authorities. The real trouble is not that we lack original thinkers, but that, owing either to a want of imagination, or to jealousy, on the part of those who should foster this sort of thing, our inventors find their promising schemes nipped by a killing frost.

I remember hearing the late Dan Leno make some suggestions for the improvement of the human body, and though the notion may seem unduly daring and even impious to some, it struck me that there was sense in some of his notions. I do not attach much importance to the idea that a man should have an eye in the top of his head to see when bricks are falling on him, because, after all, bricks very seldom do fall on men, and even when such an incident occurs the man is generally wearing a hat. But the other idea, that the flesh and muscle of the calf of a man should be put as padding or a cushion to cover the shin bone is distinctly good. As Mr Leno pointed out, when a man is cautiously making his way across a dark bedroom, after having undressed, and he hits his shin against a box, the pain is intense, and so is the language. He never hits up against anything with the back of his leg, and so if the Leno plan were adopted much suffering and a good deal of lamentable language would be avoided. I daresay that the people at the Patent Office will

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say that they have nothing to do with this, and that is true. I mention it only in order to give me the requisite courage to submit a scheme that has haunted me for years. The truth is that all thoughtful people have been struck by the fact that there is a tremendous amount of force wasted in the world. Waterfalls and rushing streams and torrents, though made use of here and there, are in thousands of instances neglected. Then there is the enormous, the gigantic, force exerted by the rise and the fall of the tides around our shores. A wild-eyed man once asked me if I knew how much force there was in the tides, and I regret to say that in a moment of flippancy I replied that it must be a "tide-y" amount, and after that he refused to discuss the question any further. It may serve me right if people hold out as little encouragement to me, but I have discovered two great sources of force or energy unused, and they could certainly be harnessed by clever engineers. In the first place, all over the world, and at nearly all hours, there are men making the most terrific drives with golf clubs or sticks. The accumulated power so exerted must be immense—even one swing of the driver is not to be despised, as any man can learn by putting his nose in the way. Now if by some scheme of wireless electrical communication the sum total of all this muscular effort can be concentrated, we have a source of power rivalling Niagara. My second scheme has to do with fleas. No

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one has ever taken a census of fleas, but we may safely assume that they number thousands of millions, and when you get some output of strength multiplied by thousands of millions the result must be remarkable. We have all heard of the man who said that if the fleas that occupied the same bed with him had been unanimous they could have pulled him out of bed. The strength of the flea resides mainly in his hind legs, and so great is that strength that he can jump thirty times his own height. Imagine a man six feet high having such powerful legs that he could leap up one hundred and eighty feet into the air. He would be beyond all question a record bouncer, and that is what the flea is. The man who said that while one swallow does not make a summer, one flea will make almost any number of tremendous springs, was guilty of a very paltry joke, yet his miserable jest contained a truth. Now the combined and concentrated strength of all the hind legs of all the thousands of millions of fleas, jumping thirty times their own height again and again and again, forms one of the most remarkable of the wasted forces of the world. The man who can harness it will perform a great service and will make a great fortune—very likely ignoring me altogether. After having read about the fate of other original thinkers who have approached the Patent Office, I do not propose to trouble myself or the authorities in regard to my ideas. Indeed, when I began to write I

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had no intention of mentioning them. All I wished to do was to defend the English against the too generally entertained notion that they are lacking in inventive skill, ingenuity, and enterprise, and having, I think, succeeded in doing this, these lines have not been written in vain.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE
ENGLISHMEN ABROAD

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-THIRD ABOUT ENGLISHMEN ABROAD

THE OLD NOTION WHICH WAS PREVALENT not very long ago that all Englishmen who travel abroad wear knickerbocker suits of huge chess-board checks, big clumsy boots, cloth caps, and smoke dirty pipes, tramping through picture galleries and cathedrals with a grin of stupid contempt, no longer obtains. It is as obsolete as the slander that all Englishwomen have large feet and unsightly prominent front teeth. And in the same way we are beginning to understand that a Frenchman is not necessarily an atheistic libertine with an absurd waist, pegtop trousers, or that he wears a loosely twisted necktie about as large as a tablecloth. He is no longer pictured as eternally standing with shoulders shrugged up on a level with his eyes, and hands outspread as high as their shoulders, palms upturned, in an attitude of polite despair. The fact is that the two nations have begun to understand each other, to some extent at any rate. Even now, however, I have noticed that the French are singularly slow at understanding their own language, and I have often puzzled well-educated Parisians when addressing them in French. There is a pleasure in doing this, such as that enjoyed by the warrior who pounds the enemy with his own guns. But the *entente cordiale* has done much to remove misunderstandings, and I believe that I and an English friend, now a distinguished barrister, had something to do with bringing about this better state

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of things. Shortly before the dawn of this new era I and my friend were in Paris, and we journeyed out to Suresnes, where cheap weddings are joyously celebrated. We drove back to Paris filled with kindly feeling toward the French people, and when the Arc de Triomphe was reached we stopped the carriage and stood up, with hats off, and saluted the arch in what was intended to be the correct military style. The enthusiastic *cocher* (we did not fall into the too common error of addressing him as "*cochon*") explained to the curious onlookers that we were brave Englishmen saluting the memory of the great Napoleon. There was tremendous cheering, and a disposition on the part of some bristly visaged Gauls to kiss us, but we escaped, followed by shouts of all sorts, including some observations of a jocular, but not intentionally unfriendly, nature. Shortly after that some French naval officers visiting London formally saluted Nelson's column in Trafalgar Square, and I still believe that this was intended as a return compliment in acknowledgment of our delicate attention—and these two incidents had much to do with the establishment of the *entente cordiale*.

Years before that I was at the Arc de Triomphe in very different circumstances. I was visiting Paris with a friend who, though a peaceful man of business at home, had been in his youth a member of the volunteer force, and he was a great student of military history. In looking at the names of victories inscribed

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on the arch, he suddenly became infuriated because he saw the name of a battle which he vowed had been lost by the French. Now my friend knew all about the fifteen decisive battles of the world, and was prepared, if necessary, to provide a sixteenth. I knew nothing about the beastly battle mentioned on the arch—had never even heard of it—but it was evident from the manner in which my friend was beginning to handle his umbrella that there would be trouble if I did not intervene. There was danger of an embroglio that might lead to grave international complications. So I explained that Napoleon had been as great in the realm of politics as he was in war, and that thus he might have chalked up moral victories with the others on his Arc de Triomphe. Now all politicians know that a moral victory is a real defeat—and this fortunately pacified my excited friend. I did not dare to tell him that somewhere in the south of France there is a column commemorating the victories of the Grand Army, and that among the famous triumphs put to the credit of those heroes is Waterloo!

A little later he broke loose again. We were looking down on the marvellous tomb of Napoleon—musing as we gazed on the huge block of Finland granite, and noted the amber-coloured light streaming in on the marble angels that stand around the tomb. I have explained that my friend had been a volunteer, and he regarded Napoleon as a kindred soul. It was fitting

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that one brave man should pay a tribute to the memory of another, and so my friend discoursed in a subdued tone as he contemplated the ragged and bullet-torn flags that hang motionless, or now and then gently swaying, above the tomb of the mighty conqueror—relics of wild scenes where

“Louder than the bolts of Heaven
Far flashed the red artillery.”

And then in the midst of his almost tender ruminations he spied a Union Jack, and there was no holding him. He asked me how it came there, and glared as if I was in some way responsible. Once more danger was ahead, and I hurriedly explained that the flag might have been obtained through the *Exchange and Mart* in return for silkworms' eggs and white mice, or perhaps it was supplied from the Magazins du Louvre, where all sorts of things are sold. Gradually he was appeased, though not quite satisfied, and another awkward corner was turned.

There used to be a notion that all foreigners are scoundrels who will first of all overcharge you, and then will give you change in obsolete silver coin that are useless. This is a delusion, though I am bound to say that I have seen descriptions of the foreigner that go a little too far in the other direction. For instance, I once read this paragraph in a paper entitled *Travel* in reference to the natives of the San Gotthard district:

The people of the valley are friendly and unso-

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phisticated. A coachman returns a franc, saying that the fare tendered is "too much."

Such an incident may have happened, but it is just possible that the good coachman was indulging in a little quiet sarcasm. It is not easy for an Englishman to appreciate all the significance of accent and emphasis when listening to a foreigner. Indeed, I can imagine an alien visitor to London writing home to his native country in this way :

The people of this city are friendly and unsophisticated. They do not recognise their own most common coins. A cabman holds out a shilling, saying, "'Ere, wot d'ye call this?"

Of course one can speak with confidence only of one's own experiences, and I am bound to say that when I journey abroad I have not met with these unsophisticated people who implore me not to pay them too much. Sometimes after a financial discussion I have felt inclined to paraphrase a well-known couplet and to say :

"Take, O driver, thrice thy fee ;
Take—I give it grudgingly."

But many disputes concerning what are regarded as overcharges are the result of honest misunderstandings. In illustration of this fact let me relate what I may call the incident of Prunier and the duck in Paris. I was visiting the City of Light with a friend whom I will describe as N.H.—a gentleman who is an Oxford M.A.,

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and was, I thought, well acquainted with the French language. We resolved to dine at Durand's—I think that is the name of the place, close to the Madeleine, a restaurant frequented at one time by Boulanger and his friends. But before dinner we strolled off to take half a dozen oysters somewhere or other, and turning down a street I saw oysters in a window—labelled “Colchester natives,” “Whitstable natives,” and other sorts, and this was just what we wanted. The place had a humble little door, and the name over the door was Prunier. It seemed to us that the good Prunier was a struggling tradesman who ought to be encouraged, so we entered. When once inside we were shown upstairs, and it appeared that the worthy Prunier occupied a considerable part of the street, the rooms upstairs being large and palatial, so that we had evidently underestimated the importance of M. Prunier. However, that was of no consequence, and we ordered our oysters, and they were good. As it was evident that we could get a good dinner there, we resolved to remain instead of returning to Durand's, and my learned friend N. H. explained in very eloquent French—accompanied by much oratorical gesture, for he is a Welshman—that we wanted a small portion of duckling, as that dainty appeared on the menu. With much earnestness he drove home the fact that we did not want much (“Non, non,” said the obliging waiter), but just a trifle, the merest suspicion of duckling—and

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away went the smiling and bowing gentleman in the apron. Then we sat at our ease, but as time went on, and when a quarter of an hour, and then twenty minutes, had passed, I became nervous, saying, "If they are doing something special we shall be charged a price that would make Rockefeller gasp." Soon our vigil came to an end—the two doors at the end of the room were thrown open and in marched a procession—some great man (it may have been the superb Prunier himself) at the head, looking like a chevalier of the Legion of Honour, followed by the chief waiter, and then by a big strong man bearing a huge dish on which reposed the carcass of a duck, the largest duck that ever was on sea or land, as big as an ostrich, gross as a mountain, and covered with gallons of brown sauce and gravy. The strong man put down his load on the table, and after recovering his breath he gasped out "Voilà!" We sat aghast, and the learned N. H., having remarked "Voilà, be damned!" sank back in helpless laughter. So did I—and I noticed that the polite French people around were trying to conceal the fact that they saw what had happened—but it was too much for them, and they also collapsed into unrestrained mirth. Meantime the members of the waiters' procession formed up and marched off with the huge fowl, to cut it up, for this first performance had been the customary preliminary view. Soon the dismembered monster was brought back, and only the lack of

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music and singing caused the affair to differ from a processional, for the waiters looked as solemn as a flock, or a herd—perhaps I should say a school—of bishops. Tennyson in his poem about the wooing of the humble maiden by the mighty Lord of Burghley describes how at length the great man leads his unsuspecting bride to a spot from which she could see his highly desirable country residence, and then remarked, “All, all is yours,” or words to that effect. In the same way it was intimated to us that the whole duck was at our disposal ; indeed, I believe if we had claimed its beak and its feet we could have had them. In the case of the humble maiden, I think it is on record that she pined away and died ; but the crisis roused us. We felt that the credit of the old country was at stake, and we “ fell to,” as Homer and Sir Walter Scott are so fond of saying in their accounts of feasting. The gallant French people around murmured remarks about the brave English who do not know when they are beaten. It was a Frenchman who watched the charge at Balaclava, and though he felt bound to say it was not war, freely admitted it was magnificent, and in this incident of the duck similar sentiments were expressed. There was this further resemblance between the two affairs—on both occasions it was obvious that “some one had blundered.” But we went for the duck even as our brave countrymen dashed at the Russian guns more than half a century be-

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fore. We did our best, but when we had reached the limit of our devouring capacity, we seemed to have made no real difference in the appearance of the gigantic bird. We had taken little pieces here and there, even as a mountaineer chips little footholds in the ice, but the great ornithological mountain remained almost *in statu quo ante*. So we fell back, defeated but not disgraced, and what had been intended to be a diminutive snack to precede something else proved to be a *pièce de résistance* (and successful resistance, too), and it cost eighteen francs. The waiters gathered round as if to encourage us to further efforts, but for once Englishmen, or Britons, did know when they were beaten. We explained to the chief official that it was our will and pleasure that the duck should be handed over to the municipal authorities in Paris to be distributed among the poor, and then we marched out amid sympathetic applause—and we left them alone with their poultry. It struck me that the famous national phrase or motto should in future be written: *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité et Prunier*. From scenes like this old England's grandeur springs—some of our unimagined fellow countrymen would have said that there had been a deliberate imposition, but we knew better. It was a misunderstanding, not of a sort that could be properly submitted to the tribunal at the Hague, but one that no reasonable man would allow to disturb the feelings of amity existing between two brave nations.

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Only once have I had anything to do with a transaction that might have shaken for a moment that friendly understanding. I was at the Gare St Lazare, and asked a station official to label my luggage. He said in a questioning manner, "Victoria? London Bridge?" and yet he must have known that I was going to travel *via* Havre. It was all too evident that he was trying to avoid some word which he did not like, and that word I provided by saying clearly "WATER-LOO." He started, as though the word aroused painful memories of Wellington and Adams, and for a moment it looked as if he was going to renew an incident that was supposed to have been concluded in 1815. He looked at me—I looked at him—and then we grinned simultaneously. The situation was again saved—indeed he seemed to be about to kiss me, but I evaded him withal—I induced him to forego that luxury—and (after a little financial transaction) we parted with a series of bows worthy of the great Lord Chesterfield and the greater Turveydrop at their best. As I have said, Englishmen are beginning to understand their foreign neighbours better than was once the case, and are beginning to be understood better by the foreigner. When Dr Johnson went to Paris he talked Latin—declining to attempt French on the ground that if he did so he would "give the scoundrels an advantage." There can be no doubt that a man is at a disadvantage when in a land the language of which

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he speaks slowly and indifferently—but we should remember that the foreigner suffers in the same way when he comes over here. I well remember landing at Dover one afternoon after a rough passage, and after having spent some weeks among the lively French, when I had in vain tried to keep up with their merry talk. A French gentleman who had boarded the boat at Calais as the very last thing in the way of neat and precise dandyism staggered along the Admiralty pier, awfully dishevelled and battered, and made his way to one of the little tea-bars. With cringing salutations he said to the presiding young lady, “One coop of tay, ple-e-e-ase, Me-e-e-s,” and the tea was handed to him with that look of icy detachment which is one of the characteristics of the respectable English young person. And I thought, “Now it is your turn, my fine fellow”—and it was with a feeling of profound satisfaction that I saluted the national flag bravely fluttering over the grey ramparts of Dover Castle.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR
BACHELORS AND WIVES

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOURTH ABOUT BACHELORS AND WIVES

IN A GENERAL WAY THE ENGLISH MAY be described as a marrying people. It is true that once a year, when the famine for copy is sore in Fleet Street, the *Daily Telegraph* starts a correspondence in which people discuss the question of matrimony, and at such a time there are daring young men and women who deride the old institution. Things are not always what they seem, and it may be that some of these letters, purporting to have been written by those who revel in the single life, are penned by those who know the secrets of the prison-house of what is called domestic bliss. And even if the scornful allusions to the married state really come from those who are single, it should be remembered that the cry of "no surrender" is never so loud as on the eve of capitulation, and those who "jest at scars" this year may be found trotting obediently in double harness before the exigencies of Fleet Street require a renewal of the correspondence, twelve months hence. Apart from these little ebullitions—sincere or insincere—the fact remains that the English are, as I have said, addicted to matrimony. Whenever Budgettime comes round, and at other times also, one hears proposals for the savage taxation of bachelors. I have sometimes suspected that these suggestions or demands are made by those who are "happily married," as the phrase goes. There is just a suspicion of revenge

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about them. So, I believe, the enslaved elephant in the East lends itself willingly to the ensnaring of its uncaptured brethren. But, besides those who argue that because they have been "roped in" they think that others should be brought into subjection, there are some advocates of matrimony and of large families who seem to me to exhibit the final climax of impudence. I allude to the celibate cranks—lay, as well as ecclesiastical—who have so much to say on this subject. Not many of the Anglican bishops are single men, but one of the small band of bachelor prelates has amused the world by enlarging on the difficulties encountered by a single man who has to make both ends meet on £10,000 a year, plus a palace and a town mansion, and by denouncing all those who have not a swarm of children. And there are celibate laymen also, who lead snug, comfortable, and selfish lives, who rave away against the declining birthrate. We may leave these talkative physicians to heal themselves. In America there is a proposal to class unmarried men with gipsies and other undesirables. They are to be denied the right to the prefix "Mister" before their names, being described on all occasions as "Bach. Smith" or "Bach. Jones." I doubt if such treatment would have any effect on the problem. I have also seen a scheme for taxing bachelors, and in this way raising a sum of money to be used for providing old age pensions for lingering spinsters.

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There is a hint at the wild justice of revenge about this. We are asked to imagine the feelings of the bachelor who stumps about conscious that his money has provided a new hat for one of his natural enemies. It is conceivable that he might fall a victim to the charms which he had paid to adorn, and then he would be able fully to appreciate the feelings of the eagle brought down by a shaft bearing his own feathers, of whom the poet has written :

“ Keen were his pangs, but keener far to feel
His was the pinion that impelled the steel.”

It generally happens that there is involved in what is called the wild justice of revenge an element of very real injustice. And so thoughtful people have recognised that a man may be a bachelor from no fault of his own. He may have tried, tried, and tried again, and all in vain. Thus some advocates of the taxation of bachelors would be willing to grant exemption to those who have made three honest proposals. The man who has offered his hand and heart and the devotion of a life-time to three women, or three times to the same woman, or twice to one woman and once to another, and has been spurned on each occasion, has evidently done what he could. It would be monstrous injustice and cruelty to mulct a man for that which is his misfortune rather than his fault. Nor can it be pretended that a skittish old maid who remains single from malice aforethought,

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and has enjoyed the luxury of turning up her lovely nose continually at supplicating man, should share in the benefits of the bonus extracted from bachelors. In the absence of such an arrangement we might have some wretched man compelled to contribute to the comfort and support of a spinster who had repeatedly snapped her fingers at him and driven him from her presence. Every man with a spark of justice in his nature would say of such a condition of things, as Jeffrey said of Wordsworth's *Excursion*, "This will never do."

I hesitate to say anything about English wives. My pen is unequal to the theme. Perhaps the safest phrase to use is that made familiar by the advertisement of Horniman's pure tea, they are "always good alike." Some people may feel inclined to apply another equally known phrase and say of them they are "grateful and comforting"—but some are not grateful, nor is there any reason why they should be, and some are inspiring, rousing, disturbing rather than comforting. Mr Birrell has made the profound remark that

Of all the many wrongs women suffer at the hands of men, that of not marrying them is the one they ought to find it easiest to forgive ; they generally do forgive.

I daresay this is true—at any rate I accept the statement. It is by no means so certain that women are as ready to forgive the men who do marry them. In

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some book, I forget whether it was a novel or not, I saw some confidential conversation on this point between two female friends. One, in referring to a man to whom she was engaged, said with fury, "I will never forgive the fellow, and I will have my revenge." The other asked, "Then don't you mean to marry him?" and the grim reply was, "That is exactly what I do mean to do." The victim was unconscious of his doom. Thomas Hood, married happily, by the way, has written :

"For wedlock's a very awful thing ;
'Tis something like that feat in the ring
That requires good nerve to do it,
When one of a grand equestrian troupe
Makes a jump at a gilded hoop,
Not certain at all
Of what may befall
After his getting through it."

It is the magnificence of the unknown that attracts many an adventurous youth into making this great experiment and taking this leap in the dark. There is an appeal to that sporting instinct that has done so much to make the British Empire all it is, and that temptation to join in a lottery which influences nearly all men. However, be the reason what it may, it may be said of many a man in the words of Calverley :

"Then, the days of courtship over,
With your wife you start for Dover,
Or Dieppe, and live in clover
Evermore, whate'er befalls.

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For I've read in many a novel
That, unless they've souls that grovel,
Folks prefer, in fact, a hovel,
To your dreary marble halls."

No doubt wives are to-day very much like the wives of previous generations, and yet few writers would now use the language that was employed by Washington Irving years ago on this theme. It is to be feared that the average man will grin at the following passage taken from the Sketch-Book of that charming writer :

As the vine, which has long twisted its graceful foliage about the oak, and been lifted by it into sunshine, will, when the hardy plant is rifted by the thunderbolt, cling round it with caressing tendrils, and bind up its shattered boughs ; so it is beautifully ordered by Providence that woman, who is the mere dependant and ornament of man in his happier hours, should be his stay and solace when smitten with sudden calamity ; winding herself into the rugged recesses of his nature, tenderly supporting the drooping head and binding up the broken heart.

I have no doubt the gentleman is quite right in what he says, but I fear that the flippant youth of the present day would dismiss this beautiful tribute with the Cockney phrase "I don't fink." It rather suggests Mrs Micawber's firm determination never to desert her Wilkins. And many a modern young woman would

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smile with disdain at the remark that woman is, in any circumstances, the mere dependant of man. We, or rather they, have changed all that.

So it is with some trepidation that I mention some of the traits which I have noticed are to be found even in the best women. Let me give one illustration—we will suppose that a china ornament is standing near the edge of a table, and a servant knocks it off. The good lady of the house will say, “Stupid creature—is she blind? How could she help seeing it? She must have knocked it off on purpose.” But if the mistress herself knocks over the ornament she will say, “Now who in the world could have been so stupid as to put it there, close to the edge? Whoever put it there must have known it would be knocked over.” Thus the same incident may be criticised differently according to the point of view. Some lady reader may ask—What would a man say on such an occasion? My dear madam, I decline to ask a respectable printer to put in type what a man would say. And I admit that a man would knock the thing over even if it were in the middle of the table. But I am at the moment writing about man’s superior—woman. Again, every properly constituted woman who owns a husband thinks that one of her duties is to “tidy up” his den. There is an eternal controversy carried on in most domestic households in regard to this. I know that man is an untidy animal. Who has not read of De Quincey’s

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huge and fathomless accumulations of manuscript into which he used to dive and bring up all sorts of treasures? But the average man would rather take his chance of finding what he wants in such a jumble than seek in vain for something that has been neatly and precisely hidden away with almost diabolical cunning. I have no doubt that here, as always, woman is right, but man is too stupid to recognise the fact. Not long ago I met a gentleman who was at one time a member of the House of Commons, and he said that shortly before we met he received a letter containing a welcome cheque for a considerable amount. He laid it by him on the breakfast table, proceeded with his meal and read the paper. When he rose to go about his business the letter had disappeared, and on asking about it, his wife told him it was in the waste-paper basket, adding, "You keep your stupid old letters for ever, until one can scarcely move about the house." That letter had arrived but half an hour earlier—and my friend assured me that only the accidental circumstance of the affair happening in the summer saved that letter from the fire.

There is a notion prevalent to the effect that women are conservative in instinct—I do not use the word in its political or partisan sense. Anyone who supposes that women dislike change, or are wedded to old notions or arrangements, is greatly mistaken. They love change for the sake of change. A wife will

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say to a husband in a musing manner, "Don't you think the room would look better if the piano were put on the other side, the books brought over here, the sofa pushed there, and the pictures and chairs rearranged?" The man, if he has had any experience, knows full well that his opinion is not wanted, and would not be noticed if it were given, and so he says with a yawn, "I daresay." An hour later the room has been so changed in appearance that the man thinks he must have gone into the wrong house. This passion for change is illustrated in the constant alterations in female fashions. I once saw a picture of a man running desperately and carrying a large cardboard box. A friend accosted him asking where he was off to in such a hurry, and he shouted back, "I am taking my wife a hat, the very latest from Paris, and am trying to get home before it is out of fashion." With what subtle skill and tireless energy women will transform a hat or a garment that has become just a trifle behind the times in style into the most modern idea, or what is, I believe, called the *dernier cri*! It is said that these transformations never deceive other women. With a quick sweeping glance a woman will see exactly what it is that another woman wears, where it was originally bought, its price, its age to twenty minutes, how often it has been refurbished, and whether these changes have been the work of a professional or an amateur. What

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man can alter his clothes? He can make a difference in the appearance of his hat by sitting on it, but that is about all. There was once a member of the House of Commons whose clothes were all made by his excellent wife. They were good, serviceable garments, though I daresay the experts of the *Tailor and Cutter* would have sniffed at them. When someone complained that Smollett's continuance of Hume's *History* was not equal to the original work, Charles Lamb asked with force and reason—How if Hume had tried to continue *Tristram Shandy*? And in the same way, if men felt inclined to criticise the legislator's clothes, it could be asked—What sort of a result would have been achieved if the honourable gentleman had undertaken to make his wife's Sunday gown or to build her bonnet?

I have heard it said that even the best women are not quite honest in all things—and that Hannah More herself would have cheated a railway company had such corporations existed in her day. Of course men who say these things do not pretend that they are any better, but they mention the facts (if they be facts) as indicating that there are spots on the sun. Thackeray declares that some of the deceptions of women are among her chief merits. He pointed out repeatedly that a good wife will laugh year after year at her husband's stale and dreary jokes, thus inducing the absurd creature to believe that he is a wit, and that his jokes

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are new. A man of my acquaintance once told me of a curious manner in which he began to suspect that his wife, the best woman in the world (as they all are), sometimes employed the methods of fiction to point a moral or adorn her instructions to the servants. He quite accidentally overheard her explaining different duties and tasks which she wished carried out, and then she added in a very impressive manner, "And as to that" (in reference to one of the orders), "the master said most particularly—" and at this moment the excellent lady shut the door of the room she was in. My friend, who first of all said there was a bitter irony in alluding to him as "the master," assured me he had never said anything about the matter, and he was consumed with curiosity as to what his "particular" message was supposed to be. But to have asked for information on the point would have been a grave tactical error, as he would have been charged with eaves-dropping, and very properly invited to mind his own business. Indeed he, and all right-minded men, would be ready to join in the tribute to woman uttered by the confused alderman in replying to the toast of the ladies. His jumble of separate and distinct verses has been repeated a hundred times, but it will serve again :

"O woman, in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please ;
But seen too oft, familiar with the face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE
ON ENGLISH MINOR POETS

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIFTH ON ENGLISH MINOR POETS

IN CHARLES LAMB'S CORRESPONDENCE with Coleridge, letter No. VII, dated 5th July 1796, begins with about five-and-twenty lines of verse, and then the writer suddenly breaks off with the exclamation, "Let us prose." It would be well if many, when given the choice between "prose and worse" (if I may repeat an ancient jest), would choose the better part. The passion, however, for producing verse is overmastering—it is an instinct as much as self-preservation. There be some who say that the English are not as a race addicted to writing poetry—that they are a practical and prosaic race, cold and unimaginative—but those who say this do err, not knowing their fellow-countrymen and fellow-countrywomen. An enormous amount of verse is produced secretly—there are illicit stills, so to speak, in which this stuff is concocted. All sorts of people who are never suspected of such practices turn out their odes and ballads by stealth. So long as the secret is well kept no great harm is done, but alas! too many of those who are guilty of these perpetrations become reckless—they love the garish day and they famish for publication. Only editors know the appalling amount of this raw material that is always seeking a market :

"What's printed we may all compute,
But know not what's rejected."

There is a tale told about an American editor who

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found among his letters a little unsolicited offering entitled "Why do I live?"—and he answered that question in the following grim note—"You live because you mailed your stuff instead of bringing it by hand." That reply explains the editorial attitude—and as for sub-editors, those blind furies with the abhorred shears, they have one compendious term of contempt for all verse, and it is—"tripe."

While the output of the English minor bard is continuous, there are periods of excessive production when the poets work overtime and at high pressure. When a monarch dies, or marries, or celebrates a jubilee, or is crowned, there are busy men, women, and children in every other house in the island, gnawing their pens, rolling their eyes and spoiling good paper. It has been my fate to receive many specimens of the results of this misspent energy, and I have come to the conclusion that quite a large number of people are under the impression that if they use the word "ye" instead of "you," the result is poetry! I believe Mr. Kipling is largely responsible for this, as he is one of the most notable of those who "write with ye's." Mr Dooley has described Mr Kipling as one who produces "Busy Pomes for Busy People," and as "President of the Pome Supply Co.; fresh poetry delivered every day at your door—all lays laid this morning." The poet seems to wish to be taken as a prophet also, a modern and minor Jeremiah, rebuking a stiff-necked and perverse generation. It is

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this that induces him to give us so many "ye's," singing, in effect :

"O ye have done this, and ye have done that,
And ye have the other thing done,
For certainly ye take the biscuit,
And verily ye take the bun."

This sort of thing is catching, and Mr Kipling may well feel rather proud because of the amount of imitation—that sincerest form of flattery—he has inspired. I remember coming across a remarkable specimen of this at the time of the present King's coronation, when a lady produced a small book of verse which I still treasure and which bears the alluring title "A Lilt on the Coronation." The sweet singer makes tremendous play with the word "ye," and I believe that in some places she is indebted to the Psalmist as well as to Mr Rudyard Kipling. This is only my opinion, and I will leave the reader to judge for himself from the following specimens.

"Oh, ye cattle upon green ten thousand hills,
Chew, chew your cud wi' right loyal wills.
And ye sheep, all bleating in the air,
Bleat ye, bleat ye, for your shepherd's care.
Oh, ye pussy cats, purr ye, purr ye, purr,
Purr in sweet melody all wrapt in coats of fur."

There are one hundred and sixteen stanzas of this sort, in which "ye sunflowers, ye lilies, ye tiny insects, ye little air birds, ye seagulls, ye prisoners and cap-

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tives," and many other creatures and things are invoked and urged to join in the general rejoicing. The lady is reasonable, however, and recognises that some may be detained by other duties and so will be unable to accept her invitation. Thus she writes most considerately :

"And ye ants, busy running, carrying, carrying on,
Ye have no time to lilt a Coronation song."

So the ants were graciously excused. The reader will notice that I have quoted eight lines, and that in them the word "ye" occurs nine times—the supply being kept up in an equally generous manner throughout the hundred and sixteen stanzas of four lines each. One may well exclaim, "Whaur's your Ruddy Kipling noo?" for the lady has out-Kiplinged that eminent man.

Some of the minor poets do not attempt anything so elaborate as the lilt to which I have referred. I remember receiving some years ago a modest little volume of verse produced by a clerk in the War Office, and he was an absolute master of the narrative style, in this resembling Homer. There was also a simplicity about his style which was by no means unpleasing. Indeed in some commemorative verse on the loss of the *Eurydice*, which was wrecked off the Isle of Wight about thirty or thirty-five years ago, he produced a couplet which I have always regarded as ab-

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solutely the best in the whole range of poetry—and here it is :

“ With countenances bright
They neared the Isle of Wight.”

Of how few poets can you say that they use no unnecessary word, and that you can see their meaning at a glance ! The War Office clerk has in nine words sketched the scene fully yet succinctly, and, what is more, his rhyme is sound. Indeed, he may be said to have uttered the last word on the subject.

One often hears of poetical license, and there are some who think that there should be a license in another sense required to be taken out by those who write poetry. I believe in this way a very large sum of money might be added to the revenue. The idea was first suggested to me by some verses written by one of our Indian fellow-subjects at the time of the visit of the King and Queen to the Indian possessions of the Crown. The Eastern bard started off with this telling invocation :

“ As a Bard of Ind, thy blessed land
Licensed to sing in rhymes,
Conducive to our climes,
It behoves me just at this hour
To invoke all my gods to shower
Blessings copious and rare
Upon thy crowned head.”

The reader will observe that the Bard of Ind claims to be licensed to sing in rhymes, but I am unable to

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say whether the phrase is used in a figurative sense or not. In any case, the poet showed the sporting instinct and paid a tribute to pluck when he observed it. In a stanza, the opening line of which reminds one of Gray's reference to "the boast of heraldry and pomp of power," he wrote :

" The pride of race, and pride of blood
So rampant in the West,
No longer felt in the far-off East
Since Victoria the best
Who with her regal pluck and knack
Set the East and the West on a par."

I like that phrase "regal pluck," and I think our Indian fellow-subject showed poetic pluck also in tackling and dismissing the Kipling doctrine that the East and the West will never meet until the Day of Judgment. And he follows up this contention that the East and the West are now on a par by claiming that Queen Victoria

" Allowed, too, our rights and rank,
In th' Senate and in th' Bar,
In all the functions of the State,
Unscrupulous of colour or creed."

I have no right to speak for the Bar, but I understand that it is quite as unscrupulous of colour and creed as it is of everything else, and I think the Bard of Ind has proved his right to a license.

There are some specimens of English verse en-



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shrined in dictionaries of quotations which make one repeat the words of Pope about hairs or straws in amber :

“The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare,
But wonder how the devil they got there.”

For instance, the helpful Bartlett preserves this specimen of sound work by Ann Taylor :

“Thank you, pretty cow, that made
Pleasant milk to soak my bread.”

And just to show his impartiality, and to avoid stirring up family jealousies, Mr Bartlett has rescued from oblivion the following by Jane Taylor, the sister of Ann :

“He minded not his friends’ advice
But followed his own wishes ;
But one most cruel trick of his
Was that of catching fishes.”

I have not a word to say in disparagement of either of the two samples of the poetry of the Misses Taylor, but I fear not a few poets who are not represented in the dictionary will feel that they have been excluded unfairly. In the same way rejected bards will possibly grumble when they find space found in the same popular work of reference for these gems from the New England Primer :

“Young Obadiah,
David, Josias—
All were pious.”

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also

“ Young Timothy
Learnt sin to fly,”

as well as

“ Zaccheus he
Did climb the tree,
Our Lord to see.”

I am sure that many a lady or gentleman who has tried and tried in vain to get a few inches of space in the poets' corner of a country paper will say truthfully, and perhaps bitterly, that she or he would do better than that on her or his head. But concerning the merits of poetry there should be no dispute—they are included in the rule “*de gustibus.*” Most of us have perpetrated verse, and each one who has done so has a tender feeling for his own little effort. It may be a poor thing—and probably is—but it is his own, his very own. In this way I am leading up gradually, so as not to startle the reader, to a plea of “guilty” on my own account. Some time ago I was sitting in the House of Commons, and one of my hon. friends was speaking. I paid him the compliment of not listening, and it was really a compliment, because it showed my confidence in him. I felt as secure as the little boy who smiled at the storm knowing that “father was at the helm.” Indeed, to show my complete faith in my hon. friend I slept as he spoke, or rather I snoozed, being half awake and half asleep, and in that dozing

ON ENGLISH MINOR POETS

condition I imagined the Speaker of the House opening the day's proceedings by singing :

THE SPEAKER'S SONG

I

Walk up, my merry members—
I care not who you are—
You're in my sphere of influence
When once inside the Bar.
All questions must be over
When I raise my voice and say,
"The clerk will now proceed to read
The Orders of the Day!"

II

Should any daring member,
When he rises in his place,
Omit to doff his tall silk-hat,
I'll floor him with the mace!
And when upon the table
His prostrate form they lay—
The clerk will then proceed to read
The Orders of the Day.

III

When I apply the closure,
By an unwritten law
The gentleman upon his legs
At once must stop his jaw.
And, though he may not like it,
He must grin and shout "Ooray!"
Because the clerk proceeds to read
The Orders of the Day.

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IV

Should the House be in committee
And I have left the chair,
My excellent and worthy friend,
J. Whitley, will be there ;
And while his smiling blandness
Shows an estimable trait,
He'll make that clerk proceed to read
Those Orders of the Day.

V

No doubt upon occasion
You'll try to catch my eye
And wave your arms and jump about,
And in despair yell " Hi ! "
But at the very moment
When you raise your voice to bray
The merry clerk proceeds to read
The Orders of the Day.

VI

Down in your native village
You may be a leading chap,
But for your speeches in the House
There's no one cares a rap ;
And while you argue soundly
That Yea's the same as Nay,
The yawning clerk proceeds to read
The Orders of the Day.

VII

And then in frenzied fury
You may leap upon the floor
To maul the back bench bounder
Or to smite the front bench bore ;

ON ENGLISH MINOR POETS

But as you come back panting
And dishevell'd from the fray
That grinning clerk proceeds to read
Those Orders of the Day.

VIII

You may stroll upon the terrace,
And there attendance dance
Upon the ladies, and you thus
Escape my eagle glance ;
But I set the bells a-ringing
And you bolt back in dismay—
To hear the clerk proceed to read
The Orders of the Day.

IX

Sometimes an all-night sitting
Will keep you out of bed,
And on the bench you stretch yourself
To rest your weary head.
But they rouse you out of slumber
Ere in dreams you pass away,
Just as the clerk proceeds to read
The Orders of the Day.

X

One night among the strangers
You'll get your friends a seat,
And promise to provide them with
An intellectual treat—
But when they see you rising
They'll unanimously pray,
"O let the clerk proceed to read
The Orders of the Day."

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XI

I care not if you're English,
Or Irish, Scotch, or Welsh,
All tricks of gross obstruction
And disorder I will squelch ;
So now I call for "Order,"
For with no more delay
The clerk will now proceed to read
The Orders of the Day.

XII

But first be all upstanding
And take your time from me ;
We'll open our proceedings
With a rousing three times three—
Then round the table prancing
With a "tooral-ooral-ay!"
Let every man proceed to read
Those Orders of the Day.

These were the lines that came to me when in a state of semi-consciousness. In having thus produced a jingle I have gone over to the majority, that is to say I have left the small and diminishing minority of those who have resisted the temptation to commit verse. I have already pleaded guilty—and now I throw myself on the mercy of the court as a first offender.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX
CONCERNING JOHN BULLISM

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SIXTH CONCERNING JOHN BULLISM

I HAVE SAID MORE THAN ONCE IN THE course of my rambling remarks about different sorts of Englishmen that it is impossible, for at least two reasons, to select one sample and to say with truth, "Here we have the typical Englishman." First of all, you will find many men who are also English and who in no way resemble the man selected as typical, and, in the second place, the qualities and characteristics which one regards as being essentially English, and which are supposed to mark out the man as an Englishman, will be found in the members of other races. In spite of all this there is a certain conglomeration of qualities, a combination of merits and defects which make up something that we like to call John Bullism. Perhaps the most noteworthy ingredient in that "ism" is a suspicion and a dislike of what are called "new-fangled notions." Very likely the same characteristic is to be found among foreigners—indeed, I am told that in some of the remote and rural parts of the United States you will find some of the least enterprising, and the most hopelessly somnolent, people in the world. And here let me turn aside for one moment in order to ask whether we are not wrong in our ordinary estimate of the citizens of the great Republic whom we compendiously lump together as "Yankees." It is customary to describe them as "cute" or "spry"—they are supposed to be en-

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dowed with supernatural shrewdness, and are looked upon as diabolically smart. Yet I doubt if they are as shrewd as many a Yorkshireman who, as he sells you a horse (selling you in more than one sense), appears to be half asleep, and potters about with a pathetic air of rustic simplicity. The fact is, that the confidence trick gentlemen of London would be quite unable to continue their interesting and enterprising careers if it were not for the amazing and almost incredible gullibility of welcome visitors from the United States. And again, it is in that favoured part of the world that freak theologians, from Brigham Young to Dr Dowie, have enjoyed their greatest triumphs. It is there that the safe cure for everything and the universal pill are sold by the truck-load, and it is among those people, regarded by some as shrewd and smart, that all sorts of fakes and swindles in connection with what is known as the "occult" flourish and abound. I forget who coined the useful phrase "erotic and tommyrotic," but it is certain that the tommyrotic finds a congenial soil and climate across the Atlantic, and brings forth sixty- or a hundred-fold.

This brings me back to my point that while your supposed typical John Bull suspects new discoveries—I mean really sound additions to human knowledge—he is not alone in that respect. For it is well known that the people who swallow crazy rubbish most eagerly are the last to accept the real thing:

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your half-baked simpleton is always too shrewd to be taken in by the truth. There is the old, old tale about the woman who denounced her sailor son as a liar for saying he had seen flying fish, but accepted with gladness his assurance that he saw a wheel of one of Pharaoh's chariots brought up on an anchor in the Red Sea—a tale which illustrates pleasingly the rejection of the truth and the acceptance of the other thing.

When we describe a type of men, we generally, consciously or unconsciously, have some particular person in mind. I believe it is so with novelists—Thackeray was no doubt thinking of someone he had known when he sketched Becky Sharp—and I will admit that I am thinking of a man whom I have known for nearly a quarter of a century when I discuss what is called John Bullism. My worthy friend not only starts and jumps when confronted by a new notion, even as a horse shies at something it has not seen before, but he dismisses any statement that surprises him as a lie. And many people who laugh at this sort of thing do the same. Let me test the indulgent reader—excluding, of course, those who have already met with the statement I am about to submit. Years ago, I heard some discussion in the House of Commons about the necessity of securing enough space in this country for graveyards and cemeteries, and some man said thoughtlessly that before long the whole island would be needed for this purpose, and there would be no

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room for the living. It was in answer to this that Sir William Harcourt made a remark that caused his opponents to cry out, "Oh, oh," and that made even his best friends stare. The statement was to this effect—there is enough space in the Isle of Wight for all the human beings now living in the world to stand at one time. The reader who has not met with that assertion before will almost certainly reject it as ludicrous. He will say—What, all the hundreds of millions of people in India, the teeming myriads (the inevitable phrase) of China, to say nothing of the vast populations of Europe and America, all standing at the same time in that tiny little island that forms part of Hampshire? My answer is "Yes, that is exactly what I mean." I do not pretend to know exactly what the population of the world is—it is added to, and is lessened, or in other words is varied, from minute to minute—but let us take it at 1500 millions. The area of the Isle of Wight is 147 square miles, or 94,080 acres. There are 4840 square yards in an imperial acre, though I believe an Irish acre contains 7840 square yards, a fact which may imply a grievance or a privilege, according to the point of view. However, in dealing with the Isle of Wight, we will take the imperial measurement, and thus we find that there are 455,347,200 square yards in the island, or more than 4000 million square feet, and this gives plenty of room for 1500 million people to stand, especially

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when we remember that hundreds of millions of them are children.

It is a mistake to suppose that my friend, the exponent and the exemplar of John Bullism, can recognise only one side to a question, for he readily admits that there are at least two and may be more. But he is convinced that his side is right and the others are wrong — that is to say, his is quite right and the others quite wrong. Anyone who differs from him in thought, or taste, or action, in regard to the most trifling matter, is dismissed as a fool without any right of appeal. Let me give an instance of his John Bullism; and I must ask the reader to follow the details with care, as they are rather complicated. My friend smokes a pipe; he buys a certain sort of tobacco, half a pound at a time; he stores the greater part in a cellar to prevent it from getting dry, keeping a smaller quantity in a jar in his hall, and from this he replenishes his pouch. The reader may ask why the good man should not do all this, and I answer that there is no reason at all—but my very English friend declares vehemently that anyone who does not smoke a pipe, does not buy the particular sort of tobacco in question in half-pound quantities, does not store the greater part in the cellar, and a smaller amount in the hall, is a fool, and a pestilent fool, too. He makes agreement with himself the test of intelligence in all matters, and that, of course, clears the way most help-

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fully to his cheery conclusion about all those who in any way differ from him being fools. In this way he approaches as near to being a typical Englishman as any man can. It happens that his favourite food is a beefsteak about the size of a cart-horse's flank, with the chill just taken off—really raw meat—and this he washes down with pints of stout. Anyone who prefers some other form of food, and who may like to have it cooked, is not only denounced as a fool, but is also declared to be un-English, and a namby-pamby decadent. He cannot understand anyone feeling unwell so long as he enjoys, as is generally the case, rude and vulgar health, and he signifies his surprise in the usual manner. It is said, though this I cannot guarantee, that he once visited an old friend who was evidently near his end, and the typical Englishman improved the occasion by saying—"It strikes me, old man, that you are dying. What are you dying for? I am not dying. You must be a fool to be dying!" As I have explained, I do not vouch for this—indeed, I do not believe that my friend actually uttered the words, but I am sure that the thoughts that such words would have expressed were in his mind. He would be puzzled, nay, bewildered, by seeing a man *in extremis* when he himself was well and hearty. Macaulay somewhere quotes the case of the Englishman who had been to some land where soldiers were dressed in blue and sailors in red, and the

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honest fellow was full of scorn for such an arrangement, saying that everyone knew that soldiers should wear red and sailors blue. As that was what he had been accustomed to, he thought that it belonged to the eternal fitness of things — and it is so with my friend. There is something really grand about his contempt for Turkish baths. “Our forefathers did very well without them,” he will growl; “give me a cold tub winter and summer” — and of course, one is soon treated to the inevitable addendum, that any one who has a Turkish bath, or who fails to plunge into icy cold water, is a fool. Even in regard to all the delicate problems connected with theological tenets he has an equally rough and ready method. He holds certain views concerning faith and doctrine and church government, and, of course, all those who hold other views, or who do not hold any, are included in the fine general purpose and railing accusation already mentioned. And he has his political opinions too, to which he clings savagely. I will not say which party in the State has the advantage of his discriminating support, as I do not wish to introduce any partisan touch—but all those who do not equal my friend in the ferocity of their zeal for that particular cause are regarded as beyond the pale of civilisation. In this case the ordinary phrase “fool” is quite inadequate, and they are branded as scoundrels, outcasts, pariahs, and lepers.

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Some years ago the Germans secured and held for a short time the record for speed in crossing the Atlantic. I remember that when the German liner that had succeeded in performing this notable feat came up Southampton water she displayed a huge white canvas sheet on which was set forth in enormous letters that well-known legend "Made in Germany." This incident aroused all the John Bullism in my friend, and he described it as "most uncalled for," and an instance of very bad taste. Then he declared that only a fool would want to cross the Atlantic at more than a certain speed, and that "certain speed" was, of course, the speed that had been attained by British liners. This craze for making records was, he affirmed, a sign of decadence, and he preferred the slower and more steady style, with some comfort, to this rushing and tearing along so as to shake one's head off. He also added some remarks to the effect that the baths on these German boats would never be used at all if English passengers did not travel by them, and he had it on the highest authority that the Germans, even in saloon cabins, were puzzled when they saw soap. I believe that these allusions to the habits of the citizens of a great nation were quite misleading, and in any case they were certainly irrelevant when one was considering the question of comparative speed. In a short time, as we all know, British engineers and shipbuilders recaptured the Atlantic record. Did my

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John Bully friend stick to his views as to the senselessness of the lust for speed? He did not—he had the cool assurance to say, “What did I tell you? I knew we could lick those Germans when it came to a race of this sort. We can simply walk away from them—we can give them a long start and beat them easily.”

His has been a curious fate, for all his life he has been desperately pushing back against inevitable progress, and has been shoved relentlessly along, gallantly disputing every inch. And with a curiously John Bullish complacency he will gradually accept the new condition of things, though nothing will make him admit that he was wrong in his first resistance. Indeed, such a man will never own to having made a mistake about anything at any time. He sails into conversation even as a Dreadnought steams into action, cocksure about everything. When bicycles first appeared he applied the inevitable test—Did our ancestors use them? As the answer to that question was in the negative, this sturdy John Bull was against these “new-fangled” inventions, and when one of those fools who think that an alliterative phrase is necessarily wise and convincing coined the expression “cads on castors,” he hailed it as the last word on the subject. In the course of a few years, however, he took to the bicycle, and began to ride one when the pioneers had begun to discard them. So long as he is behind the times,

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and comes straggling along in the rear, cursing those who lead new departures, he is content. And in this way, as I have said before, he comes as near to being a typical Englishman as any man can come. It is true that there are many enterprising Englishmen who delight in taking up new ideas. There are not a few members of the race who are flighty and feather-brained, as I have shown when dealing with some of our ingenious inventors. But I believe that there are more Englishmen who shrink from that which is new, who suspect novelty in any form, and who hold firmly that all those who differ from them in any respect are scoundrels, than there are of any other one type. It is pleasant to astonish them by the sudden presentation of new ideas, and to see them pull themselves together, even as a snail shrinks from an unexpected touch. I have always admired a phrase used by an Emperor of Brazil who, when he had to flee from his realms and to take refuge in Europe, issued a proclamation to the effect that he had left Brazil "owing to the imperiousness of circumstances." This is the force to which my friend about whom I have written, and all others like him, have to yield. They go not as they like, they go as they certainly must, being frog-marched along in that continual procession known as the mundane movement.

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